

JEEVADHARA

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

LOVE, DIVINE AND HUMAN

THE SYNOPTIC LOVE-COMMANDMENT :

THE DIMENSIONS OF LOVE IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS

George M. Soares-Prabhu

AUG 9 1983

"A NEW COMMANDMENT I GIVE YOU": JOHANNINE
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"LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF" (GAL 5:14)

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K. Luke

BHAKTI - A SADHANA FOR MUKTI

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Jeevadhara

is published every month
alternately in English and Malayalam

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JEEVADHARA

The Word of God

LOVE, DIVINE AND HUMAN

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Editorial

A Malayalam poet once wrote about love: "O! love, many are afraid of you because of the atrocities that are committed in your name." The English word 'love' is a multi-faced and multi-faceted reality which can assume meanings, sometimes far too conflicting. At the same time every religion promotes it as it is something that is basic to religion as such. In fact a continuous process is taking place in each and every religion to underscore the power and vitality of this basic reality whether it be the vertical love between man and God or the horizontal one between human persons.

It may be noted that there are four Greek words which give the various shades of meaning love can have, even admitting the fact that love is one reality. There is one word *storgē*, meaning natural, familial love, the love between parents and children, and children among themselves. It is deep-rooted, strong, often without much expression, unless it is called for. It is warm, and is devoid of any compulsion from outside. Then there is *ēros*, meaning passionate love and often it is expressed at the level of human sexuality. It is normally expressed among married couple and, as such, it is sacred and holy. The medium of body, as the seat of sexuality, is indispensable for the fuller expression of this love.

There is also what is called *philia*, a warm and affectionate love. It can be between two people of the same sex, or between people of opposite sex. It is a love based on natural appreciation, and is often based on like-mindedness. Paul exhorted the Romans to practise this love (Rom 12:9-10). The fourth word, and it is the most repeated one, is *agapē*. As such it is noble and great. It is a love that is based on a higher form of knowledge and an unconquerable good will. The knowledge is about the dignity of each human person and the good-will is to safeguard this dignity in the context of inter-personal

relationships. When Jesus told his followers to love their enemies, he was basing his teaching on a higher truth, the truth about the common brotherhood of human beings and this truth as derived from the fatherhood of God. Consequently there is no one who can be called enemy. Every other person is a brother or a sister. Love is the only possible term of relationship between them.

The Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, is a treasure-house of insights and informations about the various nuances of this complex reality of love and this issue of *Jeevadhara* tries to bring out some of these aspects. K. Luke analyses the semantics of love both in Hebrew and in Greek. Vande Walle takes up the Deuteronomistic tradition, especially as contained in the *Shema Israel* (Dt 6:4-6). In his study 'Divine Love in Prophet Hosea', G. Koonthanam has brought out the dramatic and passionate aspects of love as revealed in the life of Hosea. George Soares Prabhu dwells on the provoking dimensions of love as found in the teaching of Jesus and as handed down by the Synoptics. L. Nereparambil analyses the Johannine concept of love, especially as summarized in the New Commandment. J. Pathrapankal explores the various aspects of the Pauline teaching on love. Lastly A. Thottakara gives the Indian contribution to the concept of love through his study of Love and Bhakti. It is hoped that these studies will enable the reader to have a comprehensive vision of love with its aspects both divine and human.

Joseph Pathrapankal

The Synoptic Love-Commandment: The Dimensions of Love in the Teaching of Jesus

Any attempt to explore the dimensions of love in the teaching of Jesus will begin inevitably with the love commandment of the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 22:34-40 = Mk 12:28-34 = Lk 10:25-37). For the command to love God with all one's heart and to love one's neighbour as oneself is surely the most comprehensive and powerful statement of Jesus that we have in the New Testament on the significance of love in human life. The three Synoptic Gospels which report this love commandment of Jesus recognize its importance. The commandment is presented by Matthew as one on which "depends all the law and the prophets" (Mt 22:40); by Mark as that which is "more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mk 12:33); and by Luke as the way through which one can "inherit eternal life" (Lk 10:25-28).

Each of the Synoptics thus presents the significance of the love commandment in its own specific way, as part of its particular theological perspective. This is inevitable. For the Gospels, as Victor Paul Furnish reminds us in his excellent study of the love commandment in the New Testament, "do not just *exhibit* Jesus' teaching, but rather receive, transmit, and apply it in specific ways relevant to the needs of the Church in the writers' own times".¹ The differences in their presentation of Jesus' love command have been carefully spelt out by Furnish. He has shown convincingly how *Mark* has presented the love command as part of the early Church's missionary preaching in Hellenistic society - in order to demonstrate the oneness of God over against the many gods of Hellenism (cf. "You are right, Teacher, you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he" [v.32]), and the primacy of love over against the cult ritual of Greeks and Jews ("to love him with all one's heart ... and to love one's neighbour as oneself is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" [v.33]); how *Matthew* has presented

it as the epitome of the Law, in a polemic against the absolutization of the Torah and of all its parts by rabbinic Judaism ("on these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets" [v.40]); and how *Luke* has presented it as an exhortation to the Christian community, for he insists not so much on the love commandment itself (which is assumed to be known — note how it is the lawyer and not Jesus who pronounces it), as on the need to put it into practice ("Do this and you will live" [v.28]; "Go and do likewise" [v.37]).²

But behind these different Synoptic presentations, kerygmatic, polemic, and paranetic, lies the teaching of Jesus. Jesus has certainly inspired the Synoptic love commandment, at least in the sense that the Synoptic formulations of it are wholly in his spirit³; and it is very likely, indeed I believe quite certain, that it is Jesus who has, in its essentials, also formulated it.⁴ For who else but Jesus could have brought together Dt 6:5 (love of God) and Lev 19:18 (love of neighbour) — texts associated nowhere else in Jewish literature⁵ — into so creative and even scandalous a combination? And how else except by recognizing this combination as an authentic saying of Jesus are we to explain the importance given to the love commandment in the Synoptic Gospels, or to account for the fact that it is found in the two earliest sources (Mk and Q) of the Synoptic tradition? For it is very likely that Matthew and Luke do not here depend on Mark, but have edited an earlier Q version, parallel to Mark's source.⁶ And if Lev 19:18, a relatively neglected text in Judaism, has become the *mahavākyā* of the New Testament — presented expressly as a summary of the decalogue by Matthew (19:19); as the fulfilment of the Law by Paul (Rom 13:8-9; Gal 5:14); and as the 'law of the Kingdom' by James (Jas 2:8) — this surely could only have happened because it was Jesus himself who put this obscure text on to a level with the *shema'* (Dt 6:4-5), the great confession of Israel's faith, which was to become the key text of rabbinic Judaism.

In the Synoptic love commandment, then, we stand face to face with Jesus' teaching on love. An examination of this commandment in the earliest form available to us, that found in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 22:34-40),⁷ will thus (1) provide us with a convenient starting point for our exploration into

Jesus' teaching on love. Investigation of the love commandment will lead inevitably (2) to the command to love our enemies (Mt 5:43-48), which Matthew presents precisely as a *midrash* or interpretative comment on the love commandment. Having studied this, we shall be able (3) to draw conclusions about the significance of love in the teaching of Jesus (cf. Mt 25:31-46; Lk 10:29-37); and (4) to locate its basis in his *abba* experience, as this has been communicated to his disciples (Mt 11:25-27; 5:45-48). We shall thus be able to discern in broad outline the dimensions of love in the teaching of Jesus.

1. To love God means to love Neighbour

(Mt 22:34-40)

The love commandment is formulated by Jesus in Matthew's Gospel in response to a question put by a 'lawyer' (*nomikos*) about which is the "great" commandment in the Law — one that is, that ranks above all the others, is the fundamental principle from which they can all be derived, and which can be understood as their sum and summary. The question is presented by Matthew as a malicious one ("testing him"), because no such great commandment is conceivable in rabbinic Judaism. The occasional references by rabbis to some one prescription summarizing the others (cf. Rabbi Hillel's version of the Golden Rule,⁸ or Rabbi Akiba's commendation [under christian influence?] of Lev 19:18 as "the most comprehensive rule of the Law"),⁹ or the analogies to the Synoptic 'double commandment' of love that occur in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs — and only there's.)¹⁰ are not presented as 'great commandments', summarizing or representing the rest. They draw attention to one or other precept of the Law, without invalidating the obligation that one has to fulfil also all the others. The obligation to follow the whole Law in all its parts, is always implied in rabbinic writings, and indeed usually asserted in explicit terms¹¹

a) Love is the basis of the Law

For rabbinic Judaism understands the Law 'formally' — that is, as being, in its precise formulation, the revelation of God's will. As such, the Law is binding in its totality and in all its parts, even the minutest. For its obligation derives not from *what* is commanded but from the *will of God* who commands:

and this touches equally all its prescription. Each commandment, then, is in principle as important as every other, and no one commandment can be singled out as greater or of more importance than the rest¹². "Woe to us that Scripture attaches the same weight to the easy as to the hard", laments Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai;¹³ and as Rabbi Jehuda ha-Nasi explains: "the lightest precept is to be fulfilled with the same care as the gravest, because each expresses the divine will"¹⁴.

Jesus cuts right through such a formal understanding of the Law by proposing in reply to the lawyer's question a 'first and great commandment': "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets" (Mt 22:37-40).

So not only does Jesus, in the teeth of the rabbinic understanding of the Law, propose a 'great commandment', expressly presented as one on which "all the law and the prophets" depend (*kremetai*);¹⁵ but he proposes this core-command as a double commandment of love, in which love of God and love of neighbour are set side by side. The love commandment, then, is proposed as the 'soul' of the Law, its constitutive principle, of which its individual legal prescription are concrete expressions. And this love commandment is presented as the double commandment in which love of neighbour is placed on a level with love of God. For 'first' and 'second' in the words of Jesus are meant to be indications not of rank but of sequence. Love of neighbour is not *the* second commandment, subordinate to the first: it is *a* second command which is 'like' (*homoios*), that is, similar in character and equal in importance to the first¹⁶.

b) Neighbour is the Focus of Love

Such 'horizontalism' would have been quite shocking to the contemporaries of Jesus — as it continues to shock his followers today, for they have never found it easy to adjust to the radicalism of their Master. Yet it is quite certainly what the love commandment of Jesus means. "To love one's neighbour is a commandment equal to the precept of love of God", says Ceslaus Spicq in his monumental study of love (*agapē*) in the

New Testament;¹⁷ and after having discussed the meaning of the word "like" (*homoios*), he concludes: "Such uses of the word 'like' suggest that the second commandment has the same nature or value as the first. It is analogous to the first so that, without being strictly equal, the two commandments constitute a special category of precepts completely distinct from all others. They have a common excellence and universality; the nature of the two loves is identical".¹⁸

Indeed if anything, Jesus, according to the Synoptic tradition, stresses love of neighbour even more than he does love of God. It is significant that loving God is seldom urged in the New Testament. Apart from its single occurrence in the Synoptic love command, Dt 6:4-5 (so significant for rabbinic Judaism) appears nowhere else in the New Testament; while Lev 19:18 is quoted or implied in nearly every strand of the New Testament tradition. Indeed "there is only one other Synoptic passage [other than the love commandment] which speaks at all of man's love for God (Luke 11:42: the Pharisees 'neglect justice and the love of God'), and the idea appears only rarely elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g. Rom. 8:28; I Cor. 2:9; 8:3; 16:22; Eph. 6:24; I Jn 4:20-21)".¹⁹ But the whole New Testament is spilling over with endlessly repeated exhortations to love neighbour (cf. Mt 7:12; Lk 6:32-36; Jn 13:34; 15:12-17; Rom 13:8-9; I Cor 13:1-13; Gal 5:14; Eph 5:1-2; Phil 2:1-5; Col 3:14; Jas 2:8; I Pet 2:17; I Jn 3:23; 4:7-12; II Jn 5), and with concrete indications of how that love is to be exercised (Mt 18:10-37; 24:31-46; Mk 10:42-45; Lk 10:29-37; 14:12-14; Jn 13:1-14; Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-35; I Cor 16:1-4; I Jn 3:17-18; II Jn 5-7; Jas 2:1-7).

Equally significant is the way in which Jesus in his teaching consistently subordinates religious observance to human need.²⁰ Mercy or inter-human concern, Jesus tells us, quoting Hos 6:6, is always to be preferred to cult (Mt 9:13; 12:7); so that one must not engage in an act of worship without first being reconciled with an offended brother (Mt 5:23-24). The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mk 2:27), and the duty to care for one's parents overrides the obligations of a religious vow (Mk 7:9-13). It is the observance of the commandments of the decalogue which prescribe one's duty to one's fellow human beings rather than of those which speak of one's

duty to God, that are recommended to the rich young man as a way to eternal life (Mk 10 : 17-19); just as it is effective concern for the needy (the hungry, the ill clad, the prisoners and the sick) that will entitle the just to receive their eternal reward (Mt 25:31-46)

c) God is Loved when Neighbour is Loved

This of course does not mean that the New Testament brackets out the love of God, or that it reduces religion to philanthropy. Rather, the comparative neglect of 'the command' to love God by the New Testament authors is best explained by supposing that (1) the early christian tradition has preferred to use words other than 'love' with which to express humankind's relation to God²¹ – possibly because 'love' implies a reciprocal relation among equals, and so can be applied only analogically (if at all) to God, particularly in its primary New Testament meaning of 'doing good to'; and that (2) the New Testament has (following Jesus) developed its own specific understanding of loving God, in which to love God is to love neighbour. For the association of Dt 6 : 4-5 (love god) with Lev 19 : 18 (love neighbour) is not a mere juxtaposition of two relevant Old Testament texts, but is a combination made according to the well known rabbinic technique of interpretation (the *gezêrah shāwāh*), in which passages with similar wording ('thou shall love') are brought together on the strength of their 'analogy of words', so as to mutually interpret each other.²² Lev 19 : 18 has thus been added to Dt 6 : 4-5 in order to serve as an interpretative comment on it. To love God with all one's heart, Jesus is saying, means to love one's neighbour as oneself. One loves God *by* loving neighbour. Loving neighbour is the concrete actualization of one's love for God.²³

It is just this intimate pairing of the love of God and the love of neighbour that constitutes the specificity and the uniqueness of the teaching of Jesus. Inter-human concern is obviously an element in all religious traditions. The liberated Buddha sends out his disciples on a mission, "for the profit of many, out of compassion for the world, for the bliss of the many, for the welfare, the profit, the bliss of Gods and humankind" (*Mahāvagga* I. 10:32), and the Bhagvadgītā makes "passionate delight in the welfare of all beings *sarvabhūtahite ratah*) the mark of the truly liberated person (V. 25). The Old Testament too,

both in its legal codes and in its prophetic exhortations abounds in prescriptions that urge concern for one's fellow human beings and which prohibit the exploitation of the powerless.²⁴ But inter-human concern here is always a secondary attitude which follows from a prior religious experience (liberation) or a primary commitment to God (the Covenant). It is only with Jesus that the ethical attitude becomes as it were an integral part of the religious experience itself: for to experience God as 'Father' is to experience the neighbour as brother'. The horizontal is thus inseparably welded into the vertical, and love of neighbour is brought on to a level with love of God.

2. To Love Neighbour is to Love your Enemy

The striking emphasis on inter-human concern which is so characteristic a feature of Jesus' teaching on love is paralleled by an equally striking insistence on the universality of that concern. The love of neighbour demanded by Jesus reaches beyond all limits of personal preference, of class or caste solidarity, of religious or racial oneness. The neighbour we are to love is any one in need (Lk 10:25-37), indeed specially the unrewarding (Lk 6: 32-34; 14:12-14), and even those who are hostile to us (Lk 6: 35-36).

Such loving of one's enemies is not as uniquely a christian demand, as is sometimes suggested. It probably features in some form or the other in all religions, and is certainly strikingly conspicuous in Buddhism. "Hatred is never stilled by hatred in this world", says the Dhammapada, "only by non-hatred is hatred stilled — this is the eternal law." (1:5) And this 'eternal law' is vividly illustrated by the Buddha in a touching story which tells of how the prince of Kosala spares the life of his enemy the king of Kashi (who had slain his parents and annexed his kingdom), because, just when about to strike him down, he recalls the words uttered aloud by his father as he was being led to his execution, as a last instruction to his son following him at a distance: "Do not look long [i.e. do not let your hatred last long], do not look short [i.e. do not be quick to fall out with your friends]; for hatred is not appeased by hatred, hatred is appeased by non-hatred alone."²⁵ Indeed the 'love command' of Buddhism (and Hinduism) is in a sense more comprehensive than that of the Christians for it reaches out to all sentient

beings and not to humankind alone. Christianity with its curious insensitivity to non-human life — its tolerance of bull-fighting and blood sports, of the ruthless hunting down of animals for 'fun', and the reckless extermination of whole species of living things for 'profit', has a lot to learn from the Hindu-Buddhist tradition of reverence for life.

Yet there is something particularly impressive in Jesus' command that we love our enemies. This appears, in Matthew's Gospel as an interpretation of Lev 19:18, formulated to serve as the sixth antithesis of his Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it was said: 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy'. But I say to you: 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in the heavens: for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.'" (Mt 5:43-45)

The antithetical form of the passage is very likely the result of Matthew's editing of his Q-source (cf. the parallel in Lk 6:27-28); but the injunction to love one's enemies is certainly from Jesus, probably in its Lukan form, whose synonymous parallelism and underlying rhythm are characteristic of Jesus' sayings.²⁶ It is likely too that Jesus did in fact pronounce the saying (as Matthew suggests) as a homiletic comment on Lev 19:18 — possibly during a synagogue service when this Old Testament text had been read²⁷.

Loving enemies is thus for Jesus an explication of loving neighbour. In its original Old Testament setting, of course, 'neighbour' in Lev 19:18 means no more than a 'fellow Israelite'. For the text in its immediate context reads: "You shall not hate your brother ('āh) in your heart, But you shall reason with your fellow tribesman ('āmit); You shall not take revenge nor bear a grudge against the sons of your own people (b'ne 'ammākā), But you shall love your neighbour (rēa') as yourself." (Lev 19:17-18)

The neighbour to be loved as oneself is thus the 'son of your own people', the 'fellow-tribesman', the 'brother'. Even the extension of this command to the 'stranger' (gēr) in Lev 19:34 does not make an essential difference. For a 'stranger' (gēr) in

the Old Testament is not usually a non-Israelite — generally designated there as an ‘alien’ (*nokri*), or as the ‘gentiles’ (*goyim*) — but a ‘dispossessed Israelite’, living in a territory where he has no property or tribal rites, or later and by extension, a Canaanite fugitive who has been ‘adopted’ into Israelite society²⁸. Eventually the *qēr* comes to signify a ‘proselyte’ or convert to Judaism, and it is doubtless that in this sense it was understood in the time of Jesus²⁹. Jewish tradition at the time of Jesus, then, would not have been familiar with the idea of loving enemies — particularly when such enemies were understood not just as personal adversaries but as members of an alien and hostile group. And if no Old Testament or rabbinic text speaks of *hating* one’s enemy, the exhortation to the Qumran sectaries in their Manual of Discipline to “love all the sons of light, each according to his lot along the council of God, but to hate all the sons of darkness, each according to his guilt in the vengeance of God” (I Qs I:9) shows that Matthew’s formulation of the traditional understanding of Lev 19:18 (“you shall love your neighbour but hate your enemy”) was not altogether unfounded.

Sayings like this illustrate the sharp religious and political tensions (Pharisee against Sadducee, Zadokite against Hasmonean, Jew against Roman) that tore up Jewish society in the time of Jesus, and give particular point to his sayings on love. How shocking Jesus’ demand to love enemies must have appeared in a society where love was largely restricted to the confines of a tightly-knit ethnic or religious group, and where hatred of the foreign oppressor was preached with religious fervour. For what Jesus asks for is not just the resolution of personal antagonisms within the group, but for the acceptance of members of alien and hostile groups as well. “It seems clear”, notes Furnish, “that the enemies envisioned in both Synoptic versions of the commandment are those who oppose God’s people (and therefore God), and whose opposition is expressed in direct personal ways: as persecution, cursing, abuse.”³⁰ The love command of Jesus is thus radically comprehensive. Political and religious antagonisms as well as personal ones are the objects of his command.

Understood in this way the command to love one’s enemies becomes the most challenging and radical of Jesus’ demands. No

barriers of personal antipathy, religious disharmony, class conflict, or caste or race prejudice, can be allowed to impede the imperative of love. Love must determine not just our personal conduct but our public life as well. This is to be urged not only on black Africans struggling against the unspeakable indignities of *apartheid*, or on the Latin American *campesinos* opposing utterly repressive military regimes, or Dalit Panthers confronting the terrible reality of caste atrocities — but equally on Polish Trade Unionists fighting for their rights, or on Afghan nationalists resisting foreign aggression! No one, Capitalist or Communist, is outside the pale of love!

Such love for our enemies ought not, of course, to hold us back from an active and effective resistance to the exploitation and oppression of the 'poor' that these 'enemies' engender. If Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, invites us not to resist one who is evil (Mt 5:39), he is not advocating passivity in the face of injustice, but is inviting us not to 're-taliate' or 're-act' to evil, but to overcome it through constructive action. Aggression is not to be met with aggression nor with servility but with constructive assertiveness.³¹ Jesus' own life of vigorous protest (Mt 23:1-30; Mk 2:23-28; 7:1-15; Lk 6:20-26) is strong evidence for this. Indeed a struggle for justice is a necessary and integral part of Jesus' love commandment.

3. To Love means to Do Justice

The reason for this is that 'love' in the teaching of Jesus is not merely an affective emotion — the experience of "pleasure in proximity, a desire for fuller knowledge of one another, a yearning for mutual identification and personality fusion."³² It is primarily an effective concern: "an active, effective love", Spicq has called it, "operating with singular tenderness."³³ The Gospels of course know about and approve of the affective love of friendship, for which they generally use the Greek word *philia*. This is the love for one's parents which the follower of Jesus must transcend (Mt 10:37); the love which binds friends together (Lk 11:5; 28:12); or the love which Jesus had for his disciples (Lk 12:14), for Lazarus and his sisters (Jn 11:3-5), for the 'disciple whom he loved' (Jn 20:2).

a) Love Aids and Affirms

But it is not to such an affective love of friendship (*philia*) — which of its very nature is limited to a closed circle of friends — that Jesus urges his followers in his love commandment or in his command to love enemies. Here, and indeed overwhelmingly in the New Testament, we meet with a different kind of love -- a specifically 'Christian' love, active in character and utterly universal in scope, for which the New Testament has its own special word, *agapē*.³⁴ Such love is primarily a love of effective concern which shows itself in 'doing good to' the neighbour (Lk 6:35), by responding actively to his concrete needs (Lk 10:29-37). But the effective concern of *agapē* should not be mistaken for an impersonal doling out of benefits, with scant respect for the person to whom one gives. Such condescending giving is far from Christian love. For the effective concern of *agapē* is rooted in a Christian experience which recognizes in the neighbour a brother or a sister. Christian love affirms the neighbour as 'brother' even as it reaches out to aid him in his need.

Because *agapē* experiences the neighbour as brother it responds to the *totality* of his needs. Its expressions are thus manifold — spiritual, material, personal and societal. Love as taught by Jesus means indeed forgiveness (Mt 18:21-22), reconciliation (Mt 5:23-24), self-forgetful service (Mk 10:42-45; Jn 13:1-15), the non-judgmental acceptance of persons (Mt 7:1-5), a wholly disinterested concern for the unrewarding (Lk 6:32-34), and a willingness to reach out to and to help even those who are hostile to us (Lk 6:35-36). But it means too 'doing good to' the neighbour in his material and social needs — sharing one's bread with the hungry and one's clothes with those who do not have enough to wear (Mt 25:31-46; Lk 3:11); visiting prisoners (Heb 13:13) and 'communicating' with the outcasts and untouchables of society (Mk 2:13-17; Lk 15:1-10); sheltering the homeless and caring for the sick (Mt 25:36); proclaiming the 'good news' of liberation to the 'poor' (Mt 11:5) and setting free the oppressed (Lk 4:16-21). And because the biblical tradition understands the human person to be a living *body* rather than a *soul* temporarily and somewhat accidentally inhabiting a body, it gives special importance to these 'corporal works of mercy'³⁵. Indeed it is precisely such expressions of social concern that are proposed most frequently and most explicitly by Jesus and his

followers as the most authentic criteria of genuine Christian love (Mt 25:31-46; I Jn 3:17-19; Jas 2:1-7,14-17).

b) Love Strives after Justice

In a community that has arrived at a structural understanding of society,³⁶ such expressions of social concern will not be limited to a privatized sharing but will take the form of action for justice — that is for the transformation of those social, economic, and political structures which hinder the emergence of a just and fraternal society. Aware of the extent to which such structures (the economic, political and social systems which control the distribution of property, power, and social rank in any given society), determine the configuration of a society and even the consciousness of its members,³⁷ a structural understanding realizes that the situations of poverty, unfreedom, and oppression that are so much a part of our social experience in India and elsewhere, are not just the hazards of history, nor the consequences of ill-will of a few 'wicked men', who need only to be converted for all our troubles to end. They result from the working of an impersonal system of property, power and social relationships, which operate almost independently of the people who serve them. A change of hearts is not enough. Nothing less than a change of structures is needed if exploitation and oppression are truly to end.

Effective love (*agapē*), then, will respond to the needs of the exploited and oppressed neighbour by engaging in action for the removal of the structures that are responsible for such exploitation and oppression. In an unjust society *agapē* inevitably becomes a struggle for justice: it strives "to set free the oppressed" (Lk 4:18). For as the second general assembly of the Synod of Roman Catholic Bishops has affirmed with unusual firmness and clarity: "Love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbour. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love".³⁸

(c) Love Tolerates Violence?

Does love permit the use of violence in its striving after justice? The question is a complex one.³⁹ Denunciations of violent revolution (but not, be it noted, of the structural violence that provokes them,⁴⁰ nor, until, recently, of the massive stock-piling

of nuclear weapons under the pretext of 'deterrence' [a euphemism for nuclear terror], nor even of the right to a first, pre-emptive nuclear strike which could devastate half the world)⁴⁰ continue to emerge from First World churches secure in their positions of affluence and power. They sound empty and unconvincing, in a tradition which, since at least the time of Constantine, has not only tolerated violence as a legitimate form of defence (the just war theory), but has initiated aggressive wars of great ruthlessness and brutality. Can we so easily forget the centuries of violence unleashed by the Crusades, which even today can be hailed by a loyal Christian like Henri Daniel Rops as "one of the outstanding achievements of the medieval church"?⁴¹ Or can we (its victims) fail to remember the massive colonial expeditions which set out from Europe, duly legitimized by Papal bulls, whose stupendous violence, which wiped out whole peoples from the face of the earth, led to the enslavement of millions, and to the impoverishment of whole continents, is blithely dismissed by Francois Mauriac (a pillar of Roman Catholicism) as merely "the corruption of a great idea"?⁴²

How does one reconcile the love commandment of Jesus with opinions like these? Or is it only violence against the 'Unyoung, the Uncoloured and the Unpoor' that Christians find wrong?⁴³ It may be of course that our perception of Christian love has changed so radically in the past fifty years that the violence that was encouraged then⁴⁴ has become unacceptable today. Perhaps. But may it not also that the love of enemy proposed by Jesus does not necessarily exclude opposition, even if need be violent opposition, to the evil that this 'enemy' does—particularly when this evil is directed against a brother whom also I must love and protect?

A structural understanding of society may throw some light on this. Such an understanding locates the root causes of oppression and exploitation not in the ill-will of individual oppressors, but in the operation of the exploitative, economic and political system to which they belong, and of which they themselves are often the unconscious victims. By distinguishing between the oppressive structure (always to be contexted), and the 'oppressor' (always to be loved), such an understanding of

(2)

society allows us to struggle even violently against an oppressive system, without necessarily ceasing to love those who operate it – particularly since the system dehumanizes both the oppressor and the oppressed, and its destruction is the liberation of both. Paulo Freire is worth listening to on this subject: “Yet it is – paradoxical though it may seem – precisely in the response of the oppressed to the violence of their oppressors that a gesture of love may be found. Consciously or unconsciously, the act of rebellion by the oppressed (an act which is always, or nearly always, as violent as the initial violence of the oppressors) can initiate love. ..As the oppressed, fighting to be human take away the oppressors’ power to dominate and to suppress, they restore to the oppressors the humanity they have lost in the exercise of oppression”.⁴⁵

4. To Love Means to Be a Child of Our Father in Heaven

But whatever be our response to the tangled question of violence, we cannot evade the obligation of loving our enemies – even when we feel justified in opposing him with violence! The obligation to love every human being, without any exception whatever, is an integral part of our Christian existence. For our Christian existence is constituted by our experience of the Father’s unconditional love revealed to us in Jesus. “No one knows the Father”, says Jesus, “except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him” (Mt 11:27), and Paul can tell the Christian of Rome: “You have received the Spirit of sonship, [for] when we cry ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8: 15–16). But to be a child of God means to be ‘like God’ – not indeed by aspiring to a divine knowledge of ‘good and evil’, an act of human *hubris* which leads to the destruction of humankind, not to its divinization (Gen 3, 1–21); but by loving as God loves. “Love your enemies”, Jesus tells us, “so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and the good and sends his rain on the just and the unjust” (Mt 5:45). As children of the Father in heaven we love as unconditionally and as universally as he does.

The prescriptive form of this saying can be misleading. It might suggest that our divine childship is somehow conditioned

by our ability to love our enemies. "Love your enemies . . . 'so that' (*hopōs*) you may be the sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Mt 5: 45). But this is to misunderstand the subtle Greek construction. What is really being said is that by loving our enemies we show ourselves to be children of our father in heaven: our love for our enemies is an indication that we are indeed God's own. There is a close parallel to this in Luke's story of the sinful woman who anoints the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7: 36-40). "Therefore I tell you," Jesus tells the Pharisee, "her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for (*hoti*) she has loved much" (Lk 7: 47). As the parable of the Two Debtors which Jesus has just narrated shows, this is not to be understood as meaning that the woman has earned her forgiveness by her love: so that much has been forgiven her *because* she loved much. Rather the great love she is able to show is a sign that her many sins have indeed been forgiven. As the Jerusalem Bible correctly, if some-what awkwardly, translates it: "For this reason I tell you that her sins, her many sins, must have been forgiven her, or she would not have shown such great love." (Lk 7: 47) Her great love thus proves that her many sins have been forgiven — just as the little love shown by Simon the Pharisee shows how little forgiveness he has received. It is he (and this is the sharp, ironical point of the story) who is in need of forgiveness, and not the woman whom he has so contemptuously dismissed as a 'sinner'.

Ultimately then our *agapē* is rooted in our experience of God as *Abba*; for to experience God as Father is to experience every human being as brother or sister. Our love for neighbour is a consequence of our experience of God's love for us. As I John has put it with marvellous concision: "We love because he first loved us". (I Jn 4: 19)

The love taught by Jesus, then, is a love which comes from the Father and can indeed come only from him. God alone is the source of love, of all love — "every sort of love . . . the highest and the lowest, the poorest and the richest, the most ridiculous and the most sublime . . . all sorts love", as David, the father, in Ingmar Bergman's great film *Through a Glass Darkly*, explains to his alienated son at the film's end.⁴⁶ This is a cinematographic transposition of what I John has to say in what is perhaps the most profound comment ever made on Jesus' teaching

on love: "Beloved let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love" (I Jn 4: 7-8). Here we have the ultimate, depth-dimension of love in the teaching of Jesus.

Foot Notes

1. Victor Paul Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (London: SCM 1973) 23.

2. Ibid., 24-25; also Günther Bornkamm, "Die Doppelgebot der Liebe", in his *Geschichte und Glaube, I* (München: Kaiser 1968) 27-45.

3. Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell 1963) 55.

4. Cf. Furnish (n. 1 above) 62; Rudolf Pesh, *Das Markusevangelium, II* (Freiburg: Herder 1977) 247.

5. Furnish (n. 1 above) 62.

6. Klaus Berger, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu, Teil I: Markus und Parallelen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1972) 203; Pesch (n. 4 above) 244-45.

7. If Mark gives us a considerably expanded version of his original source (a variant of the one used by Matthew) adapted to the needs of a Jewish Hellenistic community - cf. Pesch (n. 4 above) 244; Luke has slightly abbreviated his Q-source (which he has in common with Matthew) to provide an introduction to his parable of the Good Samaritan - cf. Bultmann (n. 3 above) 23.

8. Cf. *bShab* 31a: "What is hateful to you do not to your fellow: that is the whole Law; all the rest is explanation; go and learn!" - quoted from C. G. Montefiore & H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: Schocken 1974) 200.

9. *Sifra* on Lev 19, 18 - quoted in George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, II* (New York: Schocken 1971) 85.

10. Cf. Andreas Nissen, *Gott und der Nächste im antiken Judentum* (Tübingen: Mohr 1974) 230-44, sp. 240.

11. Ibid., 236-37.

12. Gerhard Barth "Matthew's Understanding of the Law, in G. Bornkamm. G. Barth & H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London: SCM 1963) 77-78; and Nissen (n. 10 above) 337-42, for a detailed presentation of the evidence.

13. *bHag* 5a — quoted in Barth (n. 12 above) 78, n. 1,
14. *Aboth* II, 1 — in the explanatory paraphrase of R. Travers Herford, *The Ethics of the Talmud: Sayings of the Fathers* (New York: Schocken 1962) 39.
15. Not in the sense of exegetical dependence, as if the whole Law could be exegetically deduced through from the love commandment; but in the more basic sense that love is the 'essence' of all the commandments. The Law thus 'hangs' on the love-commandment as a door hangs on its hinges — Barth (n. 12 above) 77-78.
16. Furnish (n. 1 above) 31.
17. Ceslaus Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament, Volume One: Agape in the Synoptic Gospels* (St. Louis: Herder 1963) 28.
18. *Ibid.*, 27-28.
19. Furnish (n. 1 above) 27.
20. Spicq (n. 17 above) 137; "It is perhaps surprising to realize that the duty of loving one's neighbour seems to prevail over duty toward God".
21. Furnish (n. 1 above) 27.
22. *Ibid.*, 28; Berger (n. 6 above) 170.
23. George Soares-Prabhu, "The love Commandment: The Jesus Way as a Way of Revolutionary Concern", *Anawim* 21.
24. Cf. C. van Leeuwen, *Le développement du sens social en Israël avant l'ère chrétienne* (Assen: Van Gorcum 1955) for a comprehensive and perceptive account of Israel's social concern.
25. Cf. Paul Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha: According to Old Records* (Tucson: Omen Press, 1972) 90-94.
26. O.J.F. Seitz, "Love Your Enemies", *NTS* 16 (1969/70) 39-54, sp. 52. Cf. also Heinz Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium, I* (Freiburg: Herder 1969) 345-46 for a closely argued demonstration of priority of the Lukan form of these verses.
27. Seitz (n. 26 above) 42.
28. Martin Noth, *Leviticus* (London: SCM 1965) 144; D. Kellermann, art. "gur" in G.J. Botterweck & H. Ringgren, *TDOT*, II, 443.
29. Seitz (n. 16 above) 48.
30. Furnish (n. 1 above) 48.
31. Assertiveness involves "standing up for personal rights and expressing thoughts, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appropriate ways which do not violate another person's rights". It thus implies "respect for oneself, that is, expressing one's needs and rights, as well as respect for the other person's needs and rights" — Arthur J. Lange & Patricia Jakubowski, *Responsible*

Assertive Behaviour (Champaign, Illinois: Research Press 1976) 7. The ministry of Jesus is of course a superb example of responsible assertive behaviour; so is Gandhi's *satyāgraha*.

32. Karl Menninger, quoted in Furnish (n. 1 above) 16.

33. Spicq (n. 17 above) 138.

34. The verb *agapān* (= 'to love') occurs in the New Testament 141 times, the noun *agapē* (= 'love') 117 times. This alone shows how significant the word is for the New Testament teaching on love. Whether this large use of *agapē* is indeed special to the New Testament, and whether the word as used in the New Testament has consistently a specific meaning which never coincides with that of *philia*, are disputed questions — cf. the well documented discussion in Ceslaus Spicq, *Notes de lexicographie néo-testamentaire*, I *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 22,1] (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires 1978) 15–30.

35. Cf. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (London: SCM 1972) 77; Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM 1974) 10.

36. Cf. the excellent analysis of "the two basic perspectives for looking at social affairs: *actor-oriented* and *structure-oriented*", in Johan Galtung, *The True Worlds: A Transnational Perspective* (New York: Free Press 1981) 41–44.

37. "It is becoming more and more evident that the structures of our society are among the principal formative influences in our world, shaping man's ideas and feelings, shaping their most intimate desires and aspirations; in a word shaping man himself". These words from Decree 4, no. 40 of the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (Dec 1974–Mar 1975), express a truth now a commonplace in sociology, but which has been rarely expressed with such clarity and vigour in an ecclesiastical document.

38. *Justice in the World* (Statement of the Second General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, November 1971), n. 34—quoted in Joseph Gremillion, *The Gospel of Peace and Justice* (New York: Orbis 1976) 520.

39. Cf. J.G. Davies, *Christians, Politics and Violent Revolution* (New York: Orbis, 1976) for a sound theological discussion; John Ferguson, *The Politics of Love: The New Testament and Non-Violent Revolution* (Cambridge: James Clarke 1973) for a 'pacifist' interpretation of the New Testament evidence; and Jean-Michel Hornus, *It Is Not Lawful For Me To Fight: Early Christian Attitudes Toward War, Violence and the State* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1980) for a serious study of Christian attitudes towards violence in the pre-Constantine Church.

40. On structural violence, cf. the comment of Galtung (n. 36 above) 107: "We assume that structural violence is tremendously significant because of its two major forms of expression ... *repression* (or uniformity, as the opposite of diversity, pluralism, freedom) and *exploitation* (as the opposite of equity). In extreme cases structural violence may be so repressive that it virtually leads to the psychological death of the people exposed to it, or so exploitative that it may lead to their physical death by keeping them well below the limit of fundamental need satisfaction". Another and perhaps more familiar term for structural violence is 'institutional violence'.

41. Henri Daniel-Rops, *Cathedral and Crusade: Studies of the Medieval Church* (London: Dent 1957) 481.

42. Quoted in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *signs* (North Western University Press 1964) 324. As Merleau-Ponty biting remarks: "But the idea is in François Mauriac's mind ... the Vietnamese themselves have above all seen the 'corruption' of it" (Ibid). Significantly 'good' Catholics like Mauriac have consistently been avid defenders of Western imperialism!

43. Cf. Colin Morris, *Unglorying Uncoloured Unpoor* (London: Epworth Press 1969) — a fascinating polemic against the attitudes of the Western Christian 'establishment'.

44. J. Derek Holmes, in his *The Papacy in the Modern World* (New York: Crossroad 1981) gives a telling example. "After the defeat of the Abyssinians [in a particularly dirty colonial war, waged with great barbarism — including terror bombing and the use of poison gas — against a defenceless and wholly inoffensive people, who posed no threat whatever to their invaders], the Archbishop of Rhodes was sent to Addis Abbaba as Apostolic Visitor and celebrated a Pontifical Mass during which he 'saluted all the heroic soldiers of the Italian army which the world admires, but at which Heaven has no need to marvel since it is their ally'. One could hardly hope for a clearer legitimization of a nakedly aggressive war (p.70).

45. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1972) 32.

46. Quoted in Robert E. Lauder, *The Love Explosion: Human Experience and the Christian Mystery* (New York: Living Flame Press 1979) 26.

"A New Commandment I Give You": Johannine Understanding of Love

We find in St. John an insistence on observing one commandment which Jesus gave to his disciples on the eve of his passion and death, saying: "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Jn 13:34). Here, loving one another as Christ has loved, is something which cannot be easily understood. Probably by discovering the meaning of this new commandment, the modern Christian may be able to solve the puzzle created by Jesus' teaching on love in the Synoptic Gospels and thus to realize the challenge of his Christian vocation. Hence let us now make an attempt to discover the true meaning of Jesus' new commandment and its bearing on Christian life.

Foot-Washing, the Context of the New Commandment

According to John, Jesus gave this new commandment during his Last Supper, immediately after he had washed his disciples' feet. As an introduction to the narrative of the whole Supper scene and the Passion, John says: "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1). This helps us to realize that Jesus' act of foot-washing and the giving of the new commandment were expressions of his great love, which was intimately related to his "hour", the hour of his suffering, death and resurrection. In 13:1, the Greek phrase "*eis telos*" can mean "to the end", or "to perfection". Probably both these meanings are intended here.¹ That is to say, Jesus loved his disciples to the end of his life and to the end or perfection of love. "Having loved them", namely having begun to manifest his love for them through the events of his incarnation and life-activities, he has now come to the concluding manifestation of that love in his death which is the climax of love. For Jesus has said: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (15:13). Such a love is manifested when Jesus freely gave up himself fully to the passion and cross, which is symbolized in the foot-washing.

The symbolic meaning of the Foot-Washing

The foot-washing symbolically represents what Jesus does for mankind. It shows that the one event of Jesus' self-giving in love, whether it is considered historically or sacramentally, is both effective and exemplary.² The foot-washing can be seen, therefore, as the symbol of his self-emptying work of salvation, and also as an example of life-style to be imitated by his disciples. Usually it is the slave who washed the feet of his master. Sometimes the disciple too would do the same for his Rabbi.³ Hence, doing this unusual service to his disciples, Jesus was humiliating himself. This corresponds to the Pauline Theology of self-emptying. Paul says that Christ, although he is God, "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death and even death on a cross" (Phil 2:7-8). John also had the same vision. The humble act of foot-washing was, for him, the symbol of Jesus' self-abasing work of salvation, the climax of which is seen in his suffering and death on the cross. That is why Peter is told that this washing is essential for salvation (Jn 13:8).

The foot-washing is also a symbol of a new life-style, which Jesus shows his disciples as an example to be imitated by them. For he said: "If I then your lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (13: 14-15). Since this washing symbolized the whole life of Jesus, which was a self-emptying for the sake of others, the disciples too have to take up this life-style of being fully for others, by serving them even to the point of self-sacrifice and humiliation. In short, just like Jesus, the disciples also have to come to the level of self-forgetting love.

The New Commandment

After giving them an example to imitate through his symbolic action of foot washing (13:15), Jesus gives to his disciples a commandment saying: "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (13:34). That this commandment is very central in the Johannine literature can be shown from the fact that it is repeatedly referred to in the Gospel as well as in the Letters of John. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12); "This I command you, to love one another" (15:17); "Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which

you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new commandment, which is true in him and in you" (1 Jn 2:7-8); "And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another just as he has commanded us" (1 Jn 3:23); "And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also" (4:21); "And now I beg you, Lady, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning, that we love one another" (2 Jn 5).

Commandment

The Greek word used for commandment is *entolē*. In John it is used for legal order issued by the Sanhedrin (Jn 11:55), for the charge given to Jesus by the Father (10:18; 12:49-50; 14:31), and for the precept given by Jesus to his disciples (13:34; 14:15-21; 15:10-12). In 13:34 it can be understood as a precept given to regulate the whole life of the disciples.⁴ At the same time it is more than a precept or a commandment: because, already in the OT the commandment implied the idea of a revelation and a divine pedagogy which is the basis of religious and moral life. Hence, Jesus' new commandment can be understood as a new teaching, a new way which Jesus revealed to his disciples. By this Jesus revealed to them a new world, communicated to them a new life, indicated a task, and entrusted to them a project.⁵ Thus the new commandment is the summary of the revelation which Christ made.⁶ In the Johannine literature we see the word *entolē* used both in the singular and in the plural. But referring to the precept of loving one another, it is used in the singular. This suggests that just as in the Synoptics (Mt 7:12; 22:36-40) and Paul (Rom 13:9-10), John also sees all the commandments summarized in the one commandment of love.

Since the content of the new commandment is love, we can say that the commandment is love and love is the commandment. Love is no more an option or a luxury for a Christian. This idea of seeing love as a commandment seems to have been inspired by the Johannine perspective of looking at the Last Supper scene from the angle of the OT covenantal theology.⁷ The command of the Father to the Son, which involved his death and resurrection (Jn 10:18), has been given out of love (3:16), and has been lovingly accepted and fulfilled by the Son, and thus the Son ever remains in his Father's love (10:17; 15:10). In the same way the disciples also have to accept Jesus' love-commandment and fulfil it with love. In the case of Jesus as well as of the disciples, the motivating force of the commandment is love.

Agape (Love)

In order to understand the true meaning of the new commandment we need to know what exactly John means by the term "*agapē*" (Love). It is a love which does not consider the worthiness or the beauty of the object of love, but loves the object for its own sake, seeking its highest good. Thus *agapē* is the unconditional love. It is not natural to man, but supernatural, produced by the Holy Spirit.⁸ Hence, the love (*agapē*) involved in the new commandment is not a love of the natural level, but a love of the supernatural order, and is unconditional, self-forgetting and totally altruistic in its nature.

The Newness of the Commandment

"A new commandment I give you", said Jesus (Jn 13:34). Here the Greek word used for "new" is *kainē* and not *nea*. *Neos* signifies "new" from the aspect of time, while *kainē* indicates "new" from the aspect of form or quality or of that which has not been used before.⁹ So, the newness of the commandment in Jn 13:34 has to be seen not from the chronological point of view, but from its quality. For already in the OT there was the commandment which demanded love for the neighbour (Lev 19:17f.; Pr 20:22; 24:29). Love for God and men is the summary of the Law.¹⁰ The newness of the commandment in the NT, therefore, has to be seen in the quality of that love as announced in the words "as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34).

"As I have loved you"

How did Jesus love us? This question is well answered in the Johannine writings. Jesus loved us with the same love (*agapē*) with which the Father loves him and the world. It is a total love involving a total giving: "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hands" (Jn 3:35). It is with this love that the Father loved his only begotten Son before the foundation of the world.¹¹ This *agapē* makes the lover give all what he has to the one whom he loves. It is a generous and all-embracing love. It is with this love that the Father loved the world: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (3:16). It is with the same *agapē* with which the Father loves the Son, that he loves the disciples too.¹² This premordial, generous, all-embracing, self-forgetting, and self-giving original love is the archetype and model of Jesus' love for his disciples, and that of the disciples for one another.

Jesus loved us with the same *agapē* with which the Father loved him: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you" (15:19). It is the same love with which Jesus loves the Father.

Being ready to embrace the cross, Jesus said: "I love the Father" (14:31). Jesus' whole life on earth was the manifestation of this same love. He could not love the Father without loving those whom the Father has given him.¹³ Hence, in loving the Father and loving men Jesus manifested one and the same love, the divine *agapê*. This love was the core of his life. So he said: "I abide in his love" (15:10).

Manifestation of Divine Agape in Jesus

How did Jesus manifest this love towards men? If we make a bird-eye-view of the Johannine writings, we can easily understand the meaning of the phrase "as I have loved you". In his letter John says: "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us" (1 Jn 3:16). In fact Jesus' whole life was a laying down of his life for us, an expression of *agapê*. This is reflected in the summary statement: "...having loved... he loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1).

This love can be seen in the mystery of the Incarnation. Being the eternal Word of God, he came down to us assuming our human condition with all its pains, sufferings and limitations, and manifesting himself "full of grace and truth", namely the condescending love and faithfulness of God (Jn 1:14). This love he manifested in choosing the disciples (1:35-51). This *agapê* is reflected in all the "signs" he did. At Cana he manifested this love giving the joy of the "new wine" (2:1-11), and healing a Roman official's son (4:46-54). It was this divine *agapê* that he manifested when he healed an abandoned paralytic at the pool of Beth-zatha (5:1-9). This same love has been manifested when he fed the hungry crowd by multiplying the loaves in Galilee (6:1-15). This same divine *agapê* he manifested when he unconditionally forgave sins and sent in peace a woman caught in adultery (8:1-11). It was with the same love that he took initiative and healed a man born blind in Jerusalem (9:1-41). This love has been touchingly manifested when he shared the tears of the family of Bethany and raised Lazarus to life (11:1-41).

Jesus manifested the divine *agapê* not only in his deeds, but also in his words as well. This love is reflected in his prophetic criticism over the Temple and in his teaching of true worship (2:13-22; 4:21-24). He taught how God's love is manifested in sending forth his Son to the world and sacrificing him on the cross (3:14-16). He manifested the divine *agapê* in conversing patiently with a sinful woman of Samaria and making her and her people to accept their Saviour (4:1-42). The same love is reflected in his self-giving through the Eucharist and in explaining the meaning of that sacrament (6:51-58). Jesus manifested the divine *agapê* by presenting himself as the one who

intervenes to help man in his needs and problems. If man is hungry, he is there as his living bread (6:51-58). If man is thirsty, he is there to give him the living water (4:10-14; 7:37-39). If man is in darkness, he is there as his light to guide him safely to his goal (8:12). By presenting himself as the Good Shepherd, Jesus showed that he is the perfect manifestation of the divine *agapē* (10:1-18).

As a grain of wheat that dies to self for producing new grains for others, so did Jesus manifest the divine *agapē* by suffering and dying willfully and lovingly for others (12:25f; 18:1-19:42). Even in his sufferings he manifested the self-forgetting love. In the scene of his arrest he wished the safety of his disciples and pleaded: "... let these men go" (18:8). He loved them as the one who gives them fully all what he is and all what he has. As he was dying on the cross, he gave them even his own mother as their mother (19:26-27). Even after his death, he manifested this great divine *agapē* as he appeared to his disciples as the risen Lord. When Mary Magdalene was crying at the empty tomb, he reached there to console her (20:11-18). When the disciples were hiding themselves in a closed room being full of fear, he came to their midst to strengthen them with his peace and joy (20:19-23). When Thomas was in a crisis of faith, he rushed to him to bring him to the certainty of faith (20:24-29). When the disciples were frustrated after having toiled all night and caught nothing, he came there to give them a miraculous catch of fish and comfort them (21:1-14). Jesus manifested the divine *agapē* also when he appointed Peter as the head of his Church after having forgiven his sins unconditionally and confirmed him in true love (21:15-17).

All these seem to have been in the mind of John when he reported the new commandment of the Lord of loving one another "as I have loved you" (13:34). This total self-giving love of Jesus was in the mind of the author of the First Letter when he wrote: "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us" (1 Jn 3:16). Contemplating on the person of Jesus, John came to realize that Jesus is the concrete manifestation of God's love (*agapē*), and that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8-9). He understood the nature of this love too. It is an unconditional, generous and undeserving love: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 Jn 4:10); "We love, because he first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19). So, God's love is not a love counting on our love or merits. It is this love which the Lord demands of his followers when he orders: "Love one another *as I have loved you*".

“Love one another”

According to John, the true love is of God, for God is love (I Jn 4:7-9). Hence this love is a supernatural divine reality. This love, with all its special qualities as explained above, flows from the Father to the Son, and from the Son to the disciples. Now, giving the new commandment, Jesus wants that this divine *agapē* has to continue to flow from the disciples to all fellowmen. As he told the allegory of the Vine and the branches, Jesus clarified this point: ‘As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love ... This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you’ (Jn 15:9,10-12). This is a love that results in communion. Jesus remains one with the Father by loving him. And this love he shows by fulfilling his command which involves death to self: ‘For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again ... this charge I have received from my Father’ (10:17-18). In the same way the disciples also can enter into communion with the Father and the Son, if they fulfil Jesus’ love-commandment which involves death to self.

Hence, when Jesus commands: “Love one another as I have loved you”, it means that we love our fellow-men with the same quality of love with which he has loved us. It is a self-forgetting, self-sacrificing love. Death to self is its special feature. It is of the same quality as that of the heavenly Father, whose love is unconditional, unlimited and all-embracing, extended even to the enemies¹⁴. In fact, Christ loved us and laid down his life for us, when we were sinners and enemies of God¹⁵. The love with which we have to love one another, therefore, should be of the same supernatural quality, namely unconditional, undeserving, extended to all: including the enemies. This would imply that we extend to our fellow-men undeserving and unconditional love, help and pardon.

It was after giving an example of humble service in foot-washing (13:1-17) that Jesus gave this new commandment. Hence loving one another as Jesus has loved us, implies that we practise this love by serving others with humility. Since the foot-washing symbolically indicated the humiliation of the cross, we have to practise this love by lowering ourselves, voluntarily undergoing sufferings, humiliations and even death. In short, the new commandment demands that we love our brethren with the same quality of divine love (*agapē*) with which Christ loved us.

Now, as regards the quantity or intensity of this love what shall we say? Some authors try to interpret the phrase “as

"I have loved you" in terms of analogy. The mutual love of the disciples stipulated by the new commandment is then only analogous to the divine *agapē*, being similar to it in kind, but different from it in intensity.¹⁶ But in the Letter John does not seem to view this love in terms of analogy. For he writes: "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 Jn 3:16). Here the love of the disciples is of the same intensity as that of the Master. It is true that in the context of the promulgation of the new commandment, Jesus explicitly asked his disciples to imitate him and wash one another's feet (Jn 13:14), while he did not explicitly ask them to imitate him in laying down one's life for others. But, since the foot-washing symbolically indicated his laying down of his life, the idea is implicit that the disciples have to imitate him even in the intensity of love which he has shown. Here the quality and quantity of love are intimately related to each other. Just after enunciating the new commandment, Jesus says: 'Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (Jn 15:13). With that intensity Jesus loved, and it seems that he demands a love of the same intensity from his disciples in their love for one another (15:12). Since the quality and quantity of this love are so intimately related to each other, we can say that the love involved in the new commandment is a love which knows no limit.¹⁷ It should be a love tending to be perfectly expressed as that of Christ. Hence, even though, in reality, in the case of many disciples the intensity of the love prescribed by the new commandment may not reach the point of expression of laying down their lives for others, in its very nature it should be tending towards that point.

This love may appear to be a sectarian love as that of the Qumran community. Because in the new commandment stress is placed on the mutual love that binds together the community of Christ's disciples, the new people of God.¹⁸ But if we look into the Johannine concept of *agapē*, we can understand that the love involved in the new commandment is not a sectarian love excluding all non-Christians from its range.¹⁹ Because, for John, it is the very love with which the Father loves all without distinction (Jn 3:16), and which the Son expresses through his death which is meant to gather together all the scattered children of God (11:52). Since it is the all-embracing divine *agapē* that flows from the Father to the Son, and from the Son to the disciples, and meant to continue to flow from them to all men, the love envisaged here is not a sectarian love, but a love oriented towards the whole humanity. It is true that, according to John, the very structure of divine

agapē is such that it can find its expression only in the community of the "sons of God", the "brothers" of Jesus. For the author of the Johannine Letters, "brethren" might have been the members of the Johannine community who remained in communion with him and accepted his interpretation of the Johannine Gospel, while the secessionists were not the "brethren".²⁰ But this does not prove that the love envisaged in the new commandment of Jesus in the Gospel was sectarian. The anomaly created by the historical situation in the Johannine community cannot alter the true meaning of Jesus' new commandment. In the Johannine community love for one another was very much insisted upon.²¹ In the historical context of the Johannine community at a time of persecution, this meant that when the travelling Christians came to one's house, he had to love them in spite of their being strangers. Besides, love of God and love of neighbour are shown as combined (I Jn 4:20-21). Hence, even though the love is of the context of the Christian community, it has the quality of an all-embracing love, a love even for the enemies.²² When the divine *agapē* was manifested in Jesus with the working of the Holy Spirit, there were two movements: one of concentration, and the other of opening to the world. Similarly in the love envisaged in the new commandment too there are two movements: one of concentration on the community of disciples, and the other of opening without limit to the whole world.²³ Both these movements of the divine *agapē* are oriented towards one purpose, namely to make the whole mankind share the divine intimacy in perfect communion.

The Sign Value of this Love

Jesus said: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35). This love is the badge of discipleship. If the followers of Christ reproduce in their mutual love the same love which the Father showed in sending his Son (Jn 3:16) and which the Son showed in laying down his life (10:18; 15:13), it will be a powerful revelation to the world.²⁴ This revelation of divine *agapē* will draw all men to Christ and his Church.²⁵ Since the new commandment was given in the context of his departure, Jesus seems to have envisaged this love as a powerful witness and sign of his Church and of his presence to the world.²⁶

Conclusion

Christians are the new people of God, the people of the new Covenant. Just as Yahweh in the OT gave the ten commandments to Israel in connection with the old Covenant, so in the NT Jesus as God and Lord promulgates his new commandment

in connection with the establishment of the new Covenant with the new people of God, which he sealed with his blood.²⁷ According to the new commandment, a Christian has to love his fellow-men with the same divine love (*agapē*) which was manifested through the person of Jesus Christ. The source, inspiration and exemplar of this love is Jesus. Not counting on the merits of one's fellow-men, the Christian has to love them for the sole reason that Christ has loved him with a special love, and that Christ has commanded him to love his fellow-men with the same love. A Christian has to love by spending himself completely for others through humble service carried to the point of self-sacrifice, self-abasement, self-emptying. This is the meaning of Jesus' new commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you." Only one who deeply loves Jesus by believing in him, can practise this love, and that person is a true Christian.

Foot Notes

1. Cf. Louis Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the NT and the Fathers*, in *History of Christian Spirituality*, Vol. 1, London, 1968, p. 136.
2. Cf. C. K. Barrett, *Essays on John*, London, 1982, p. 96.
3. Cf. R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*, London, 1971, p. 564.
4. Cf. W. Hendriksen, *The Gospel Of John*, U. S. A., 1976, p. 253.
5. Cf. D. Mollat, *Saint Jean Maître Spirituel*, 1976, pp. 125-126.
6. Cf. C. Spicq, *Agapē dans le Nouveau Testament*, Vol. III, p. 182.
7. Cf. R. E. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 612.
8. Cf. Rom 15:30.
9. Cf. R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the NT*, Mich. (reprint) 1948, pp. 219-225.
10. Cf. Mk 12:29-31.
11. Cf. Jn 17:24-26.
12. Cf. Jn 17:23.
13. Cf. Jn 6:37; 10:29.
14. Cf. Mt 5:43-48
15. Cf. Rom 5:8.
16. Cf. J. Crehan, *Theology of St John*, London, 1965, p. 103.
17. Cf. H. Van den Bussche, *Jean, Desclée De Brouwer*, 1967, p. 392.
18. Cf. R. E. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 613; A. Nygren, *Eros et Agapē*, Paris, 1944; H. Conzelmann, *Theologie du Nouveau Testament*, Paris, 1969, p. 363.
19. Cf. A. Feuillet, *Johannine Studies*, New York, 1966, p. 158;

D.Mollat, op.cit., p.129; J.H.Bernard, *Gospel according to St. John*, Vol. II, Edinburgh, 1963, p.527.

20. Cf. R.E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, London, 1979, pp.131-135.

21. Cf. 1 Jn 3:11,13:15-23, 4:7-11,12:20f.; 2 Jn 5.

22. Cf. P. Perkins, *The Johannine Epistles*, Dublin, 1979, pp. 26-28.

23. Cf. D. Mollat, op. cit., p. 129; W. Grossouw, *Spiritualité de Nouveau Testament*, Paris, 1964, pp. 212 f.

24. Cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge, 1968, p. 405.

25. Cf. Jn 12:32.

26. Cf. Jn 13:33-35.

27. Cf. Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25.

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The whole Law is Summed up
in one Commandment:

"Love Your Neighbour as you
Love Yourself" (Gal 5:14)

Paul, the first theologian of the early Church, in so far as his writings are the first recorded documents of the New Testament, has his own profound insights into the nature of Christian love and one could say that his theology is replete with the dynamism of a love with its vertical and horizontal dimensions. Unfortunately Paul has been misunderstood as a misogynist and a misogynist, and women in particular find it hard to see anything human in Paul, The purpose of this study is to explore some areas in Pauline theology which emphasize the dynamism of love with its divine and human dimensions.

Christo-Centric Theology

In his profoundly theological introduction to the Letter to the Ephesians Paul gives a summary of God's plan of salvation (Eph 1:3-10). The characteristic note of this passage is its Christo-

centrism. Everything God does has its starting point and goal in Christ and all what he does is out of love for Christ and through Christ for the whole of humanity. God's love has been bestowed on us through the gift of his dear Son (Eph 1:6) and God will in the fulness of time bring all creation together to Christ as the Head (Eph 1:10). What is important to note is that Paul has a very positive theology to offer, a theology characterized by God's abundant love revealed in his Son. Any concept of a theology of punishing justice is foreign to Pauline thinking.

The concrete expression of this love which God has for humanity is the gift of the Holy Spirit. After writing about God's justifying action in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21-31) Paul writes: "Now that we have become acceptable to God through faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ. He has brought us by faith into this experience of God's grace, in which we now live. And so we boast of the hope we have of sharing God's glory! We also boast of our troubles, because we know that trouble produces endurance, endurance brings God's approval, and his approval creates hope. This hope does not disappoint us, for God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, which is God's gift to us." (Rom 5:1-5)

The gift of the Holy Spirit, according to Paul, is the surest and clearest sign of God's love for each individual Christian. It is in the Spirit that a Christian begins to realize the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The profound understanding he gets about the whole economy of salvation has its starting point in the experience of the Holy Spirit. It is true that the Spirit is given to us only as a guarantee (*arrabon*), as a first instalment (Eph 1:14; 2 Cor 1:22; 2 Cor 5:5) or as the first fruits (*aparchē*) (Rom 8:23). But the power of the Spirit is such that it can make us realize the depth of God's love and invite us to respond to this love through an authentic life. The important point is that the Christian should allow the Spirit to operate within him, that he should not make God's Spirit sad (Eph 4:30) and extinguish the power of his operation (1 Thes 5:19). The Christian should allow himself to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18).

The Fruit of the Spirit: Love

The vertical experience of God's love through the gift of the Holy Spirit and the operation of the Spirit within the Christian effect radical changes in Christian life. Paul speaks about the fruit (*karpōs*) of the Spirit as the concrete expression of a life in the Spirit. After having described the pathetic situation of a Christian who allows himself to be controlled by his lower human nature and produces the works (*erga*) of the base

human nature (Gal 5: 19-21), Paul dwells on the fruit of the Spirit that is produced by those who allow the Holy Spirit to control and guide their lives. Paul writes: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control. There is no law against such things as these. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death their human nature with all its passions and desires. The Spirit has given us life; he must also control our lives." (Gal 5:22-25)

It is this Christological and pneumatic understanding of love that is fundamental and basic to any discussion on the meaning of love according to Paul. In other words, for Paul, love is something that is at the very basis of the economy of Salvation: the Father loving us from eternity and giving us the gift of his beloved Son; the Son loving us and giving his life for us (Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2), and the gift of the Holy Spirit given to us as a sure guarantee of God's love for each individual Christian. Any discussion on love in Pauline theology must of necessity retain this vertical dimension of love; otherwise it is likely that we understand Pauline exhortations on love as part of a moralizing approach.

In his First Letter to the Thessalonians Paul writes: "There is no need to write to you about love for your fellow-believers. You yourselves have been taught by God how you should love one another. And you have, in fact, behaved like this towards all the brothers in all Macedonia." (Thes 4:9-10) The love Christians are to practise is ultimately based on the teaching of God himself, who first loved us and asks us to love one another. The experience Christians have gained of God's love manifested in Christ should be the motivation for them to love one another. So Paul writes to the Ephesians: "Your life must be controlled by love, just as Christ loved us and gave his life for us as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice that pleases God." (Eph 5:2)

Fulfilment of the Law: Love

The boldest expression Paul makes use of to emphasize the uniqueness of love is: "The whole law is summed up in one commandment: "Love your neighbour as you love yourself" (Gal 5:14). It is bold in the sense that Jesus spoke about love of God and love of neighbour as two inter-related realities (Mt 22:37; Mk 12:28). But Paul has summarized the whole thing into love of neighbour. He further explains it in the Letter to the Romans: "Be under obligation to no one; the only obligation you have is to love one another. Whoever does this has obeyed the law. The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery; do not commit murder; do not steal; do not desire what belongs to someone else' - all

these, and any others besides, are summed up in the one command, 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.' If you love someone, you will never do him wrong, to love, then, is to obey the whole law." (Rom 13:8-10)

It might seem that Paul has gone even ahead of Jesus in his interpretation of the law and the first commandment. Whereas Jesus had love of God and love of neighbour combined into one commandment, Paul dwells on the Second as the fulfilment of the law. It would be wrong to postulate any ideological conflict between Jesus and Paul on this issue. It is more a matter of emphasis and, whereas Jesus is answering a question raised by the Jewish Scribe trying "to test him" (Mt 22:36), Paul is exhorting the Christian communities of Galatia and Rome about the practical side of Christian life. In Rom 12:1-15:13 Paul is dealing with the various aspects of life a Christian should be aware of. In Gal 5:1-6:10 he dwells on the personal and communitarian dimensions of life in the Spirit.

There is, however, one aspect under which Paul wanted to reinterpret the commandments contained in the Thora and make love of neighbour the hall-mark of Christian life. The ten Commandments were practically all negatively formulated: "Do not kill, do not commit adultery; do not steal." At the same time they all have a horizontal aspect of interpersonal relationship. The negative formulation hardly brings out the positive reality implied by the commandment; rather they dwell on legal aspects. Put positively, they emphasize the sanctity and greatness of human person and highlight the respect and concern we owe to each other. It is this respect and concern for each other that is positively formulated by Paul when he brought in the concept of love of neighbour from the Book of Leviticus (Lev 19:18). Jesus had already laid the foundation of a positive approach to interpersonal relationship through his teaching on the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of human persons. Paul made this clearer through his interpretation of the meaning of the commandments.

Consequently Paul can call this new approach to interpersonal relationship the "Law of Christ" (*nomos tou Christou*) (Gal 6:2). It is not that Christ is giving a new law after abrogating the old; rather he established a new principle of action and attitude: "Help to carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will obey the law of Christ." (Gal 6:2) This law would necessitate that each Christian takes his brother in an attitude of love, concern, sympathy and respect.

The dynamic character of this love Paul explains in his analysis of the communitarian dimension of Christian life: "Love must

be completely sincere Love one another warmly as Christian brothers, and be eager to show respect for one another." (Rom 12:9-10) Paul insists on the sincerity of Christian love. Love is not a concept; it is an attitude and action. It is based on mutual recognition and respect. But there can be a form of love that is not sincere, that is not deep-seated. The meaning of sincere love is that it tends to become warm and affectionate. This affectionate dimension of love can happen only if the Spirit of Christ operates within the Christian. It is a love that is devoid of selfishness and pride. The Greek word for such a love is *philia*. There has been a lot of discussion about whether *agapē* and *philia* are one and the same. Without entering into the niceties of these two words one could say that *philia* adds a warm and affectionate dimension to love, which is, as such, lacking in the concept of *agapē*.

Love in Action

The most concrete and penetrating analysis of love as something that is affecting the daily life of the Christian is given by Paul in 1 Cor 13:1-13. From 1 Cor 12:1 onwards Paul was answering one of the questions put to him concerning the charisms. The Corinthian community had got involved in a controversy over the significance of two charisms practised by some Christians, namely, prophecy and glossalaly. The former was nothing but communicating God's message through an edifying conversation. It was intelligible and inspiring; but it was less sensational. The charism of glossalaly, on the other hand, was a more noisy one. As such it was unintelligible and someone present had to explain and interpret it. But it had more attractive aspects as it had certain ecstatic phenomena associated with it. The Corinthian community wanted Paul to answer its question about which of these two charisms was more important.

Paul was a practical theologian; at the same time he had his own convictions about Christian realities. For Paul it was not merely a question of answering which charism is more important; rather he wanted to educate the Christians about the very meaning and relevance of charisms. Moreover, Paul had to go to the very basis of charism as such. Paul argued: Before the Corinthians speak about charisms, they must realize that all charisms come from the one source, namely, the Holy Spirit. Without his help and power no charism is possible (1 Cor 12:1-3).

Later he explained how there are many more charisms besides prophecy and glossalaly, and he gives a list of charisms that were current in the Corinthian Church, with prophecy and glossalaly coming towards the end

of the lists (1 Cor 12:4-11; 12:28-30). Moreover, for Paul a charism is relevant and meaningful only if the individual who possesses it, exercises the charism for the common good (1 Cor 12:7). In other words, a charism ceases to be a charism the moment it is exercised for one's own advantage and self aggrandizement. Paul had to drive home to the Corinthians this basic fact because the problem in the Church of Corinth was lack of unity and love. The party spirit in the community became a serious problem and Paul devoted a good deal of his discussion to solve this radical problem (1 Cor 1:10-4:21).

After discussing the basic issues about charisms Paul takes up the matter at another level before he answers the question of the Corinthians (1 Cor 14:1-40). The argument of Paul can be summarized as follows: In any discussion on charisms the most important thing is that all charisms must be exercised within the context of *agapē*. Without *agapē* all charisms are useless and worthless. The so-called marvellous charisms of prophecy and glossolaly cease to have any meaning if they are not exercised in an atmosphere of love and concern.

Since *agapē* has not been mentioned as a charism in 1 Cor 12 and since prophecy (12:28-29) as a higher charism (12:31a) comes up for consideration at the beginning of 1 Cor 14, some scholars think that this famous hymn on love is an interpolation. Few doubt that Paul wrote it, but several point to the abrupt transition at its beginning and end as enforcing their judgement that it did not originally occupy its present position. That Paul's thought should have taken this turn is not unreasonable, taking into account the fact that he was aware of the evil effects of party-spirit in the Corinthian Church. He has been emphasizing the special services rendered by many different persons for the common good and has touched on the idea of the Church as a community of persons whose fellow feeling leads them to care for and share fully with each other.

For Paul love is the supreme gift of the Spirit which marks the Church as the Body of Christ. No one person in the Church possesses all the charisms Paul had enumerated in 1 Cor 12:4-81 and 12:28-30; but every person can receive the charism of *agapē*. Indeed, everyone should seek it, else the special charisms fail their purpose. Hence Paul likens Christians who speak in tongues, yet lack love to a noisy combination of instruments used during pagan festivals (13:1). He does not disparage prophecy, any more than intense faith (cf. Mt 21:21) and self-sacrifice; but he considers each of these excellent gifts quite valueless without love. After speaking of patience and kindness as characteristic of love, Paul finds it easier to write of the attitudes and actions which love avoids than to define

its qualities. It seems that the disorderly situation in the Corinthian Church has influenced Paul to choose his terms with a view to rebuking the arrogant and self-important persons in that Church who were behaving so shamefully toward others.

In 1 Cor 13:7 Paul dwells on the 'eduring' power of love insofar as it bears (*stegei*) all things, believes (*pisteuei*) all things, hopes (*elpizei*) all things and endures (*hupemenei*) all things. The repetition of 'all things' (*panta*) can also mean 'always' i.e., without limitation. After his description of love's qualities Paul fixes his thought on the lasting power of love in contrast to the ephemeral forces of prophecy, tongues and knowledge (1 Cor 13:8-11). Paul then appeals to the Corinthians to turn from their too exclusive, too acquisitive interest in the spectacular gifts to value the higher gifts (12:31a) and above all else to make their aim the greatest of all these, namely, *agapē*.

A similar case Paul deals with in his discussion on eating meat offered to idols (1 Cor 8:1-11:1). The starting point of this discussion makes it clear what Paul has in mind that "knowledge puffs up, charity builds up" (1 Cor 8:1). Here we may contrast the attitude of a man who knows that he is enlightened, and who proudly defends his actions as justified by this knowledge, with the attitude of another man who acknowledges God as he is self-revealed in Christ, and who therefore recognizes that he does not yet know as he ought. Since a Christian's knowledge is that God is love, the criterion that one's knowledge is true is that one is likewise loving.

This love will entail a number of limitations on the part of those who exercise their knowledge. Paul refers to his own way of limiting his knowledge, freedom and rights for the sake of serving the Gospel. Paul's language is clear: "Be careful not to let your freedom of action make those who are weak in the faith fall into sin." (1 Cor 8:9) For Paul it is quite unintelligible how a brother, for whom Christ went to the extreme of dying, can be destroyed through imprudent exercise of 'knowledge' (1 Cor 8:11). Paul concludes: "If the food I eat makes my brother sin, I will never eat meat again, so as not to make my brother fall into sin." (1 Cor 8:13)

The task of the Christian community everywhere is to build itself up and this can be achieved only if all the members work together and edify each other. For Paul it was a matter of concern that the weak in faith should be equally protected as the strong in faith. He always practised this principle and he also exhorted the believers to do the same. He knew the inner cleavages of the Corinthian community and so he was very particular lest any disintegrating tendency should gradually break up the community as a whole.

Perhaps the most dangerous phenomenon that developed in the Corinthian community was the disorder and lack of love and concern during the celebration of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17-22). The Acts of the Apostles refers to the Breaking of the Bread as an important event in the life of the early Church, an event from which derived the unity and belongingness of the early Christians (Acts 2:42-47). Celebrated in the houses of individuals it was an occasion of sharing and rejoicing for all those who attended it. But in Corinth it became another occasion of revealing the sad spirit of selfishness and disunity. Some brought food with them and they all ate together while others were looking on. Having a beautiful name to call it - *Agapē* - it lost all its meaning, and for Paul it was nothing but a caricature of the whole reality. Wrote Paul: "Haven't you got your own homes in which to eat and drink. Or would you rather despise the Church of God and put to shame the people who are in need?" (1 Cor 11:22)

Paul understood that the real problem behind this phenomenon was lack of understanding the meaning of the Lord's Supper. For many Corinthians it was a social get-together. But for Paul it was the proclamation of the Christ-event with all its meaning until the Parousia (1 Cor 11:26). The self-giving love of Jesus was the central message of the Lord's Supper and it is this love that should characterize the celebration of the *agapē*. Anything less than that was not discerning the Lord's Body (1 Cor 11:29) and all who approached the Eucharist as a social meal were guilty of sin against the Lord's body and blood (1 Cor 11:27). The best way of discerning and recognising the body and blood of the Lord was to celebrate the Lord's Supper in an atmosphere of love and sharing.

Conclusion

Our analysis of the Pauline concept of love has shown how Paul was a practical theologian with regard to his understanding of love. He never made any theoretical and systematic analysis of this concept. He saw love as the fulfilment of the Law and also as the fruit of the Spirit. Though he had a hard time fighting for the identity of Christianity, he always had his convictions about the fact that love is the supreme charism (1 Cor 13:1-7). This love was not anything abstract; it was something which should be put into practice day by day. The conviction with which Paul affirms this is something characteristic of his theology as a whole and it is this radical approach which makes Pauline theology what it is for us today.

"Love Yahweh your God with all your Heart":

The Deuteronomist's Understanding of Love

Shema, Israel!

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might!' (Dt 6:4)

This text is not only the first part of the Shema, which every faithful Jew is to recite twice daily, but it is the core of Israel's religion and gives an orientation to his whole life towards the rule of God so that 'a man may receive upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven' (Berakoth 2:2).

The love (*'ahab*) of the Lord as man's basic attitude towards the will of God is the main purpose of the Deuteronomistic exhortations and at the time of Christ it was still considered the first and greatest commandment. Even the Deuteronomistic doctrine as a whole had still a very great influence: the NT authors quote it at least 190 times. The scripture arguments to reject the triple temptation are all taken from it and when the old law is compared to the new, in the sermon on the mountain, it is nearly always Deuteronomy that is referred to.

The Law of Love

Before giving a detailed analysis of texts and doctrine an obvious objection must be faced: How can love be commanded? Love is a spontaneous reaction to some one who appeals to our feelings and emotions, or who captures us by some remarkable qualities in the moral, intellectual or aesthetic field. Such affection is interior and personal, it can be fostered and rationalised, but it cannot be ordered.

A similar objection could be raised against an obligation to pray: If prayer is union with God, a dialogue or a conscious presence, how can, v.g., the Prayer of the Church be imposed on priests or religious?

The answer is partly found in an attitude of faith. If I truly believe that God is the sole and ultimate value of my life, the only possible result of such a faith is a response of total commitment, a full surrender in love.

Our present idea of commandment is perhaps too legalistic to convey the concept of *Torah*. It not only means law, but also oracle, warning, teaching and instruction. The order does not extract a blind obedience but a response based on understanding, a heartfelt participation in a community of trust and obedience.

The ideal king of the Deuteronomistic reform is Josiah about whom it is written, 'no king (was) like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, *according to the law of Moses*' (II Kg 23:25). This relation of law and love might be further explored by investigating the basis of such 'covenantal' love. Is it a development of Hosea's marital love symbolism or does the Deuteronomist draw his main inspiration from the vassal-overlord relationship of the Hittite treaties?

Hosea's marital love

As William L. Moran has pointed out¹ Hosea's message is mainly concerned with Yahweh's love for Israel, either as the husband of an unfaithful wife or as a parent caring for a son. It does not deal with Israel's reciprocal love for Yahweh, either as a fact or a duty or an ideal.

On the other hand, Dt exhorts Israel to love the Lord. The verb *'ahab* is used in a father-son relationship and not in that of husband-wife. There is only one indirect mention of marriage symbolism in Dt. xl 31:16: 'to play the harlot (*zenah*) after strange gods'. Usually other formulae are used v.g. 'to go after' (6:14) or 'to bow down and to serve' (5:9). The wife-husband relationship is never used for Israel and Yahweh in Deuteronomy.

Many expressions do not seem to be inspired by Hosea: Israel's love is an answer to the call 'Hear, O Israel ...' (5:1 ; 6:4 ; 9:1 etc.). This call is a traditional summons, an entreaty, and the hearing is an act of initiation and assent. The response is considered as loyalty, cleaving to the Lord (11:1 + 22 ; 30:20), as 'walking in all his ways' i.e., a pattern of behaviour which He wants (10:12 ; 11:22 etc.), as 'heeding his voice' (11:13 ; 30:16) and serving him (10:12 ; 11:13). All these are pointing more to a covenantal love than to marital relationship.

Terminology of Hittite and other treaties

Already in the letter to the king of Mari, his servant calls himself Ra'imka, your friend, 'the one who loves you'.

Tusratta (Dasarat) of Mitanni has a 'friendship of brothers' with the Egyptian ruler.

An ally wrote to Pharaoh: 'As I love the king my Lord, so do all other kings your servants.' (El Armana Letters 114.68).

Vassals of Assurbanipal should love him as they love themselves. Hiran of Tyre is called David's friend, his 'lover' ('*oheb*', in 1 Kg 5:15 and the same verb is used to describe the loyalty of Israel and Juda to David in 1 Sam 18:16).

Even in the ancient song of Deborah (Judg 5:31), the term for ally is '*oheb* (lover) and the foe is 'one who hates'.

To quote W. Moran's conclusion: 'We may affirm, on the basis of biblical and non-biblical evidence, the existence of a conception of a profane love analogous to the love of God in Deuteronomy. This profane love is also one that can be commanded, and it is a love too that may be defined in terms of loyalty, service and obedience. It is like the love of God in Deuteronomy, a covenantal love' (op. cit. pp. 81f).

Covenantal love

Israel's relationship to Yahweh is not conceived as a mystical union symbolised by that of a wife to her husband. Neither is it aimed at a cyclic renewal of some primeval myths. It does not require magical rites to be performed in order to master numinous powers. But it is the result of Yahweh's free initiative who chose Israel as his own possession and offered her a *berith*: alliance, pact or treaty.

By accepting this offer Israel is bound to respond in all loyalty and gratitude, taking up not only 'the yoke of the kingdom' —surrender in love— but also 'the yoke of the commandments' in order to walk in God's ways. One can freely choose to accept the rule of Yahweh, but once allegiance is sworn, then one is duty-bound to live up to it (cfr. Dt 6:5 and Josh 24:24-27).

Most scholars agree that Deuteronomy is structured according to the Hittite pattern of treaties between an overlord and his vassals. Its paranaesis fits in with a liturgical celebration on the occasion of a covenant renewal. Chapters 1-11 correspond to the historical prologue intended to stimulate trust and gratitude. They also develop the theme of the great commandment. Chapters 12-26 give the particular stipulations describing in detail the pattern of behaviour expected from a covenanted people. Chapters 27-28 contain the curses resulting from disobedience and the blessing by which loyalty is rewarded.

The language of diplomacy is transferred to the field of religion. To have no other god is as normal for Israel as for a vassal to owe allegiance to the one and only overlord (5:7).

Similarly, Israel is not to go after other gods (6:14) and to love Yahweh without restrictions (6:5).

The prohibition of images and the injunction not to 'bow down' and 'serve' false gods is but a logical consequence of this dedication (5:7-9 and the paranaesis in 4:15-19). Both terms 'bow down' and 'serve' are only used together regarding foreign gods. They imply a full prostration and are not found in the approved liturgy.

'The Lord is our God, the Lord is one (*éhad*)' (6:4). The first clause is an answer to the question, 'Who is our God'? In the second part, *éhad* has been understood in various ways: either 'He is unique' i.e., the contrast between Yahweh and the gods is not relative in either a qualitative or quantitative degree, it is simply absolute; or *éhad* refers to one place, one people, one God, i.e., Yahweh is the same in every corner of the land (cfr. Jer. 2:28).

'You shall love the Lord your Lord' (6:5). 'Ahab is not an emotional feeling or a lofty ideal, but a duty, a loyal adherence expected from a covenanted people.

- 'with all your heart' (*lebab*) i.e. an intensive and undivided loyalty and a full conviction.
- 'with all your soul' (*nephesh*) i.e. with your whole self, even to the point of sacrificing your life for the Lord.
- 'with all your strength' (*me'od* = muchness) i.e. with all your resources, wealth, property, spiritual and moral strength.

This covenantal love '*ahabah*' is more intense than *Hesed*, the loving kindness of parent to child. It is a strong, compelling affection which involves the concentrated dynamism and energy of the whole person. Not a visible action itself, it is the inner attitude which is a source of action and leads to action.

Motivations

i) The Deuteronomist's exhortation to covenantal love is supposed to be given by Moses just before Israel crosses over into Palestine (Dt 1:5; 4:46; 28:67 etc.) and the gift of the land plays a prominent part in the motivation to adhere to the Lord. Yahweh brought them out of Egypt, the land of bondage (5:6; 7:8), tested them but also protected them against hunger and all possible adversities (8:2-4; 8:14-16), gave them victory over their foes (3:1-6) and would give them this 'rich land' (6:10f; 8:6-10; 11:9-15). There, in the promised land, they must take heed to live a life worthy of the Lord!

ii) The idea of election (*bahar*) is often appealed to (7:6; 10:15; 14:2 etc.). Without any worth or merit of their own - they

are even less deserving than other nations – Yahweh has chosen them as his special heritage i. e. as heirs of all what He promised. Therefore they should have a filial affection for the Lord. The word *berith* often recurs in the paranaesis (4:13 + 23 + 31; 5:2f; 7:2 + 9 + 12 etc.) but only once in the code of stipulations (17:2 ‘transgressing the covenant’). The idea of a covenant is so central and overriding that the author prefers not to use it for rather marginal stipulations.

iii) However much fragmented into detailed stipulations, the will of Yahweh is considered a unity, ‘the whole law’ (*kol ham-mizwah* in 6:25; 11:8; 15:5; 19:9 etc.). The revelation of God’s will is considered a great blessing and Israel is most anxious and more grateful to know this will i. e. what is most pleasing to the Beloved in every circumstance (4:7f).

iv) There is also an appeal to reason and discernment. ‘Ask of the days of old . . .’ (4:32). Experience shows you how much Yahweh has cared in the past and will care in the future!

v) Finally there is a motivation that is more self-centred. To walk according to God’s ways means to live a happy life: ‘so that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land into which you are entering’ (cfr. 4:4; 5:16 + 33; 6:18 etc.).

N. B. Fear is mentioned several times in chapters 5–6 (5:5 + 29; 6:2 + 13 . . .). It is not a servile fear of punishment but a certain awe and reverence before the mighty Lord. According to 6:25, fear is practically identified with obeying the commands, while 6:13 associates it with ‘service’ and ‘swearing by Yahweh’s name’, i. e. recognizing Him as Lord. In fact, practically every demand in Deuteronomy is proposed more as an appeal to the heart than as a legal command.

The actual people addressed by the Deuteronomist

Moses’ exhortations ‘in the land of Moab’ are only a literary fiction. If we examine the legal section of Deuteronomy, there are cases which can occur any where and at any period of history: thieves, adulterers, insensitive parents etc. . But the aggressive landlords, the greedy merchants and the corrupt judges must have lived after Israel settled in Palestine, owning fields and having their own townships. False prophets and people who tempt others into apostasy (13:1ff + 13) belong to a still later generation and the lending of money to be released in the jubilee year (15:1ff) presupposes the existence of coinage, which came into use in the eighth century B.C.

In his dating of Deuteronomy, G. von Rad bases himself partly on the pronounced warlike spirit, ‘militant piety’, which

pervades the whole book and makes it different from the other codes of the Pentateuch (v.g. 6:18f; 7:1f; 11:23ff; 12:29; 19:1; 20:16 etc.). The Deuteronomistic exhortation would be addressed to the people of Israel at the time of king Josiah (640-609 B.C.). After seven centuries squandered in disobedience, Israel should return to the sources, codify ancient traditions and doing so omit what was no longer relevant. Since religion was so closely united with political power, Josiah made a serious effort to regain political independence.

There was no doubt the constant struggle against fertility cult which could not but displease their 'jealous' God (1:24; 5:9; 6:15 etc.). But a greater temptation was perhaps that of self-sufficiency, a danger of secularisation! If they look at their past behaviour, they will realise that they are a stiff-necked people and have no reason for boasting (9:4-6 + 24). In such situation, the Deuteronomist does not only aim at purity of feelings but at a reform in their behaviour.

Love in action

No other historical book of the OT has described the relationship between Yahweh and Israel at greater length.

On the one hand, Yahweh is the God who personally cares for men, especially the 'marginal' people: the alien without legal rights (1:16; 5:14; 10:18f; 14:21 + 29 etc.), the slaves (15:15), the Levites without field, the orphans and the widows without support (16:11 + 24; 24:12-22; 26:12-15). He intervened to free Israel from the house of bondage (7:8) and favoured her in a special way. With fatherly care He saw to their needs in the desert: bread from heaven, clothes and shoes (8:3ff). He drove away the former inhabitants of Canaan, but only in a spaced manner so that the wild beasts would not be too numerous for the new settlers (7:22). Every house, every well, every garden and every fruit tree was his gift (6:10f and 8:12f) and he would carry on taking special care of timely rain and rich harvests (11:11f).

In return, man should reciprocate by acknowledging God's gifts and being docile to his word - not living from bread alone (8:3), taking every appeal to heart, meditating on His will day and night, and bringing up the next generation in the same tradition (6:6-9; 11:18-20), i.e. being God's people not only in name but in deeds: the circumcision of the heart rather than that of the flesh (10:16).

The greatest hindrance to this covenantal love is a sense of self-sufficiency. Being chosen as Yahweh's own possession out of all the nations (7:6) should not be a reason for boasting and exaltation (8:17; 9:4): they did not move a finger to acquire this wealth and social security (6:10f; 8:11-14)!

The basic relationship of a vassal to his overlord remains obvious in this demand for gratitude and loyalty. But the added religious dimension has enriched it with such a warmth and personal appeal that the coldness of legalism has practically disappeared.

Love and justice

Lawrence E. Toombs describes justice as 'love with its coat off, in action in society'.² He points out how closely the two virtues are related in Dt 10:18f : 'The Lord executes justice for the fatherless and the widow and loves the sojourner..; love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt'. According to him, it is this conception of justice which accounts for the absence of the 'third element in the triangle of relationships': (i) God's election of Israel is the constitutive element, (ii) Israel's response is as it were provoked by this divine initiative, (iii) as a consequence of these two interactions, there emerges as third element the relationship of the members of the community one to another. However, according to L. Toombs, this mutual bond between fellow Israelites is not described as 'love' by the Deuteronomist (op. cit. p. 408).

In a certain sense, one can agree that the 'love of the neighbour' is not explicitly taken as an element of the covenant pattern. This new relationship will be much more clearly stated in the code of Holiness : 'Love your neighbour as yourself (because): I am the Lord!' (Lev. 19:18 cfr. also v. 34, 'you shall love him—the sojourner — as yourself).

In the synoptics both Dt 6:4 and Lev 19:18 will be given equal importance as the main commandment on which depend the law and the prophets (Mt 22:37-39, cfr. Mk 12:30f) and the lawyer in Luke will fuse them into one (Lk 10:27).³

However this third dimension is already implied in Deuteronomy's code of conduct. Yahweh, who cares for all, wants Israel to imitate his 'ways' and no area is excluded from the regulations dictated by covenantal love. Justice in court, where dishonesty is an abomination to the Lord (25:16), protection to a run-away slave (23:15f), special consideration for an army recruit who is newly married (20:7) or even taking back a stray donkey to its owner (22:1-4), all testify to the special bond which binds the covenantal people together into one brotherhood.

Conclusion

The Deuteronomist addresses his message of covenantal love not only to Israel in the land of Moab, before the conquest, not only to his contemporaries of the seventh century B.C., but

'this day' which he so often repeats (v.g. 2:25 ; 4:8+40; 5:1 ; 6:6 ; 11:8 ... 30: 2+8+12+15f+18...) is also today, 1983 A.D.

Yahweh is still the one who chooses us without any merit on our part as he chose Israel:

'He found him in a desert land... he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinion, the Lord alone did lead him...' (32:10-11)

'He still proposes his covenant of love, asks a response that is not beyond our reach or possibility and yet is a matter of life and death:

'This commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off... it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.'

'See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil... I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you and length of days, that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them' (30:11+14f+19f).

Foot Notes

1. -CBQ 25 (1963) pp. 77-87: The ancient near eastern background of the love of God in Deuteronomy.

2. Interpretation XIX (1965): 399-411 Love and Justice in Deuteronomy.

3. The two texts were already associated in the 'Testament of the Twelve Patriarch's (v.g. Issach. 5:2 and 7:6 ; Dan 5:3).

R. Vande Walle

Divine Love in Prophet Hosea

Men or women are all what their love is worth. In persons of extraordinary psychic powers, love can not only soar to heights of bliss, but also, when aggrieved, run into mad fury. The anthropomorphic and anthropopathic God of the Old Testament exhibits all the fits and contours of love. It was prophet Hosea who gave us the most moving image of divine love in its fascinating and disconcerting aspects. Jesus forgave an adulteress (Jn 8:11), accepted homage from a loose woman (Lk 7:39), but never asked a disciple of his to marry a prostitute. How terrible of God to ask the good Hosea to marry a harlot (Hos 1:2) and later, after she had betrayed him, to regain her love (Hos 3:1)! How heartless would it seem of God to command Hosea to give ill-omened names to his beloved children (Hos 1:4-8)! Can one see the divine in a love which orders such seemingly non-commendable actions?

God's love, symbolized and proclaimed by Hosea's life and speech, is dramatic, passionate and verging on the scandalous. God is not only the God of justice and holiness, but also a sensitive lover languishing over the betrayal and ingratitude of his beloved. If Amos, the first of the classical prophets, startled Israel with the fury of God's unbending justice, Hosea, the second of the classical prophets, baffled Israel with the passion of divine love. No inspired author in the Bible surpasses Hosea in his creativeness regarding divine passion. Besides Jeremiah, the spiritual son of Hosea, it is perhaps the Yahwist who uses vigorous anthropopathisms (Gen 6:6ff; 4:15; 3:21 etc.) which make us feel compassion for God. As the first one to use a sponsal image in order to bring out the twin aspects of fidelity and passion in God's love for human beings Hosea occupies a place of preeminence in the galaxy of Biblical authors. Jeremiah, Deuteronomy and St Paul in the New Testament owe to Hosea the insight that God's love has the passion and pain of covenantal and marital love.

Revelation and life in interaction

Like grace, revelation too builds on nature. Prophets' experiences and apprehension of divine revelation were always tinged with the crucial experiences of their own lives. The celibacy of Jeremiah (Jer 16:1ff), Ezechiel's abstaining from the mourning rites when his beloved wife died (Ez. 24:16ff), the plight of Isaiah and his sons as signs and portents in Israel (Is 8:18), were all harsh concretizations in their own lives of the grim message they were called upon to preach to their people. But, more than in the case of any other prophet, it was in Hosea that personal life became the mirror and medium of

divine message. It is not within the scope of this article to enter into the maze of scholarly opinions regarding the highly vexed question of Hosea's matrimony. The reconstruction assumed here would be the following: Hosea married a promiscuous woman whose scandalous past was known to him. After giving him three children, she betrayed him and went flirting. Unsuccessful in this amorous adventure, she ended up as a slave, probably to be used by a priest for cultic prostitution. Hosea, raged with just fury against her and at the same time was inflamed with nostalgic longing for reunion with her. Compassion and passion for her helped Hosea to place love above anger. He went in search of her, redeemed her from slavery by paying the price of a slave to her new protector and proprietor (Hos 3:2), brought her back home, subjected her to the rigours of an imposed exclusive dependence on him, and, after this fruitful and salutary probation, granted anew her lost status of wife. Hosea realized that all the various steps and stages of this painful and tortuous matrimony were commanded by God.

This personal experience gets so inextricably and illuminatingly intertwined with his prophetic message, that images and symbols fascinatingly oscillate from the one to the other with great freedom and matter-of-factness. Hosea's life gave passion and pattern to his message. Fathoming the significance of what he had to go through in life, Hosea got both warmed up and inspired to picture Yahweh as a loving husband and Israel as Yahweh's adulterous wife. If Exodus-Wilderness-Conquest was the path of Yahweh's self-gift to Israel, Hosea too will follow the same strategic pattern for chastening and redeeming his erratic wife. He will lead her into the wilderness (Hos 2:14) and in the desert of desolation and deprivation he will gain back her love, and prepare her for the final betrothal in justice, love and mercy (Hos 2:19-20). God-people-relationship achieves nowhere in the Old Testament such highly personal overtones as in Hosea. Sin thus becomes a brutal slap in the face of one's loving benefactor-husband; it cuts deep, disrupts the most intimate of relationships, and lashes out bleeding emotions from an earnestly expectant and cruelly disillusioned divine heart.

Covenantal Love

Marital image, an effervescence of the strongest of human feelings and Hosea's own sexy character might have contributed both perceptibly and inadvertently towards an overdose of the erotic and the sensuous in Christian mystical spirituality. Hosea used bold images and forceful language in preaching about God's love for Israel; but neither God nor the intimations and demands of his love can be adduced for the mystification of sex. In Hosea

the realm of divine love is highly ethical and its context and matrix covenantal. In covenantal relationship it was the duty of the sovereign to love his covenant-partner, the vassal, to help him in times of difficulties and wish, and work for, his welfare. The response expected and commanded from the part of the vassal is fundamentally that of love and fidelity; this obligatory love is to be manifested by paying tribute to the sovereign, by obeying the stipulations set by him, by hating his enemies, loving his friends and fighting for him in times of war. In the historical preamble of the covenant the benefactions of the sovereign towards the vassal are recounted. This historical remembrance establishes the sovereign's right to demand love and fidelity from the vassal and at the same time it creates in the vassal a disposition of loving gratitude and indebtedness to comply with the demands of the sovereign.

Hosea speaks in the context of the broken covenant. The word *'ehab* (love), a covenantal term, is used by Hosea when referring to Yahweh, but he does not use it while speaking of Israel's response. The whole book of Hosea can be seen as a covenant law-suit in which the prophet harps with pathos upon the generosity of God's tender mercies profusely and repeatedly lavished upon Israel, his undeserving vassal, and sets in stark contrast Israel's ingratitude, infidelity and betrayal which has the pungency and horror of adultery against a loving husband. Covenant concept is thus shorn of its legal overtones in the hands of Hosea and gets invigorated with warmth and intensity when integrated with the images of sponsal as well as parental relationship. The Old Testament places great emphasis on the personal nature of God-people-relationship. Most of the images applied to God are taken from familial and social life, such as father, watchman, king, judge, shepherd, teacher etc. But the images of husband and parent, so admirably and masterfully used by Hosea, surpass all other images in warmth and depth. The range of involvement and the limit of responsibility between king and subject, judge and petitioner, captain and soldier, or teacher and pupil, are relatively narrow, and the depth of feeling between them is correspondingly shallow. By contrast, the range of involvement and responsibility in a husband-wife or parent child relationship is unlimited and the depth of feeling is extreme. Furthermore, these relationships are life-long, whereas the others are usually transient or sporadic.¹

History rather than Myth

The enriched covenant-image retains all its positive values and stands in good stead to Hosea in his fight against an adulterated notion of God and religion. One such priceless asset from covenant-concept is the obvious, self-evident and highly important role of history in religion. The battle that is being waged

in the book of Hosea is the battle between historical Yahwism and mythical Baalism. Although the myth of Fertility Cult is so very essential for understanding Hosea, the light it throws on the issue is all by way of conflict and contrast. Hosea's world is anchored on history. When recounting the chivalrous and valiant deeds of God's loving mercies, Hosea's thought-pattern reproduces in its own way the historical preamble of the covenant structure. The adventurous and dramatic history of the love-relationship between Yahweh and Israel had as its origin an initial act of merciful love. Israel's infancy is seen in the day of slavery in Egypt. There, in her misery and helplessness, Yahweh loved Israel (Hos. 11:1). The initiative came from Yahweh who freely chose her with a love of commiseration and conferred on her the status of a child. The delight of this exuberant love is like that of one who finds grapes in the wilderness, or like the joyous eagerness of one who finds the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season (Hos. 9:10). God's love of predilection is compared to the fondness a farmer cherishes towards his cute and dutiful heifer (Hos. 10:11). The story from Egypt onwards was one of extremely tender love which trained, nourished, tended and reared Israel (Hos. 11:1ff; 13:4ff) to a luxurious vine (Hos. 10:1), to an exalted nation commanding respect before all (Hos. 13:1).

With utter sorrow and bitter disillusionment Hosea contrasts the stark ingratitude and betrayal which Israel repaid to Yahweh for his lavish and tender love. When she had been fed to the full, she arrogantly rebuffed her God (Hos. 13:6); the more Yahweh called Israel, his child, the more they went after the Baals (Hos. 11:2); in the heyday of her vitality and fruitfulness she abused her powers and possession to pay homage to alien gods (Hos. 10:1b); Israel, the trained heifer with the fair neck deserved for her misdeeds oppressive yoke and burdensome life (Hos. 10:1b); the exuberant love of God was bitterly disappointed when Israel consecrated themselves to Baal (Hos. 9:10b). Salvation history is thus a chain of divine favours repeatedly repaid with betrayal. Reference to concrete historical events of God's mercies and Israel's sins make good document, bound up and kept ready (Hos. 13:12), for the covenantal law-suit (Hos. 2:2ff; 4:1ff) against Israel.

Hesed and Daath Elohim rather than Cult

Covenantal law-suit admonishes renewal of ethical life and declares the uselessness of cultic compensations.² Yahweh, who is the accuser and judge in the covenant law suit unravelled in the Book of Hosea, makes it abundantly clear that the demands of his covenantal love are *Hesed* and *Daath Elohim*, rather than cultic practices

In his criticism of cult Hosea stands in line with the

other classical prophets of Israel. It was not merely the external forms and practices of Fertility Cult that are involved in Hosea's criticism. To worship Yahweh in baalized liturgical forms was abominable. But more than sacred prostitution, excessive wine-drinking and infant-sacrifice, there lay at a deeper level a radical perversion of the fundamental God-concept of Yahwism. Cult degenerated into a means for influencing God and for exacting favours from Him. People would be happy if they get what they prayed for and so God becomes a supplier of commodities for man, be they rich harvests, good health or safe delivery. If supplies can be ensured from God through cult, then religion is a trade between God and man, *do ut des* system for mutual gain. Cult in such multifaceted perversion is denounced by Hosea. He sets forth the only right concept of cult. God's free and generous love for Israel and his gifts to her cannot be repaid by cult as is thought of and practised in naturalistic religions. If cult was the sole and all-important item and de and in Baalism, in Yahwism it has only a relative value. The demands of Yahweh on Israel are ethical and not cultic. If a perverted cult is abominable to Yahweh, an orthodox cult has but some relative value if and in so far as it stands in the service of the ethical and covenantal life demanded by Yahweh. These covenantal virtues get great emphasis in Hosea's understanding of divine love.

Emet, *Hesed* and *Da'ath Elohim* are the covenantal virtues and qualities that God's love expects to find in Israel. '*Emet* conveys first and foremost the idea of reliability. *Hesed* connotes both love, as strong affection, and steadfast loyalty; thus it is lasting devotion. It is the kind of inward disposition and outward commitment that characterize family relationships at their best. It involves the heart, the mind, and the will, and it is expressed in deeds of love and service³. Both '*Emet* and *Hesed* together make *Da'ath Elohim* (cf. Hos. 4:1), generally translated as knowledge of God. Knowledge of God expresses the specific, distinguishing quality, duty and privilege of the community in covenant with God. In Israel knowledge of God becomes knowledge of Yahweh, because Israel's God is Yahweh.

The term "to know" does not imply mere intellectual apprehension. It denotes a relationship of intimate personal love. By a strong analogy this term is used to denote marital union (cf. Gen. 4:1), which is the expression of one of the most intimate of human love-relationships. The kind of knowing intended by the expression "knowledge of God" comprises intellectual appropriation and emotional solidarity; it is interiority, a reception into the soul, and connotes sympathy, concern, care, attachment, dedication and devotion.

Hosea speaks of God knowing Israel in the wilderness

(Hos. 13:4). That knowledge was sympathy, concern and activity in the face of Israel's misery. Now Yahweh knows Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from him (Hos. 5:3). This knowledge is explained as God's understanding and assessment of Israel's moral condition. Their deeds do not per- it them to return to their God; for the spirit of harlotry is within them and they know not the Lord (Hos. 5:4). Israel, enslaved by their own evil deeds, is lethargized by the spirit of harlotry which incapacitates her to return to the Lord, that is, to know the Lord. Thus, in the case of a sinner, knowledge of God would mean conversion to him.

It is not a question of knowing about God, or knowing his will, but grateful awareness of God, attachment to him, complete personal involvement and engagement so that one gets the habitude and instinct to be always pleasing to God, detesting and avoiding with equal ease and spontaneity all that displeases him. The present generation is destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:16); but Hosea gives them the vision and hope of a new age in which God will betroth anew his lost people in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, mercy and faithfulness, and they shall know the Lord (Hos. 2:19-20). But why this new betrothal? Hosea's understanding of the ways of divine love gives us the answer.

Love, stronger than Wrath

By the logic of the covenant the unfaithful covenant-partner should be repudiated as 'Not-Pitied' (Hos. 1:6) and as 'Not-My-People' (Hos. 1:9), without giving them a second chance. By the ordinance of the law, a disobedient son is to be stoned to death (Dt 21:18-21). But the God of Hosea defies every logic and law for the sake of sinful people. The Book of Hosea is unique for its audacious depiction of Yahweh as a deity struggling within himself, torn between the two warring emotions of burning love and raging wrath. Hosea 11:9 has been praised as the most beautiful, if not the most sublime, verse in the whole of the Bible including the New Testament. Man and God are compared and contrasted in the nature and workings of their love. Man's love wants to possess for itself the object it loves, expects a return of love, and turns into a blind destructive power if it is betrayed. Such a human love can kill its object. God's love, in contrast, is not acquisitive, but communicative. God loves man not for acquiring anything from man, but for communicating his goodness to man. It is a totally selfless and disinterested love. It expects, in fact, commands return of love. God wants his people to love him and to belong to him in a rigorously exclusive manner, not for the sake of God but for the sake of man lest he should fall a miserable victim to the abominable practices of Fertility Cult by going

after the Baals. Since God loves his people totally for their own sake, his love cannot become a blind rage capable of destroying the apostate people. Hosea proclaims this truth when he says God is not man (Hos. 11:9). St. John's definition of God as love (1 Jn 4:8) pales before Hosea's definition of God as "not man"! John speaks of a love that is perhaps mystified, but Hosea speaks of a love that has the warmth, force and grandeur of human love with its passion, tears, agony, anguish, bitterness, power to forgive, boldness to begin anew and the courage to defy convention and covenant for the sake of a wayward beloved. Hosea's definition has been forged with the ardour of his life, an ardour which was lacking in the life of celibate John!

Raging Love

A merely sentimental love can sink into pitiful depths of writhing sorrow; but an emotional as well as moral love – and covenant love has its moral imperatives and commandments – will get ignited to terrible wrath when betrayed by the partner. In Hosea we see not only the depths of divine sorrow; but also the heights of its ablazed anger. Certainly Hosea was not the first one to teach that God is compassionate and merciful. One of the most ancient tenets of Israel's faith confesses Yahweh as a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness (Ex 34:6; Dt 4:31; Jonah 4:2; Ps 86:15; 111:4; 103:8; 145:8). It is in God's nature to be merciful, to be drawn towards the one in misery or dejection. A compassionate love drew him towards Israel when they were the pitiful victims helplessly reeling under the lashes of the cruel Egyptian task-masters (Hos. 11:1). When outraged by Israel's apostasy, God declares that he will no more have pity on Israel, that she is renamed as *Lo-Ruhama*, Not-Pitied (Hos. 1:6). Not-Pitied suggests that pity is needed, but not forth-coming. Since Yahweh is always, in his deepest being *Rahûm*, the negation of this love cancels his most basic relationship with his people⁴. The epitaph "My People" is covenantal history in compendium. It evokes the long history of God's dealings with Israel.

In describing the anger of God, Hosea uses expressions and images much sharper and fiercer than those used by Amos. Like a lion God will rend and carry off Israel with none to rescue her (Hos. 5:14). God is further compared to a leopard lurking beside the way and to a bear robbed of her cubs and so trembling with revengeful fury; punishment upon Israel will be horrible like that of a helpless prey being torn open by ferocious wild beasts (Hos. 13:7-8). God the giver and sustainer of Israel's life will bring about her utter ruin and decay by becoming to her like a moth and like dry rot (Hos. 5:12). In a fit of fury God shouts out his determination to destroy Israel

(Hos. 13:9). God, who by definition is compassionate and merciful (Ex. 34:6) avows that compassion is hid from his eyes (Hos. 13:14) and calls on personified death to come with all its plagues and destructive powers and take full merciless possession of Israel (Hos. 13:14).

Chastening Love

The great anger of God is born of his great love. The ultimate aim of God is not revenge but reunion. Israel's recalcitrance drove Yahweh to ever harsher measures. How reluctant Yahweh is in dealing out harsh blows to his beloved people is movingly brought out by the conflicts and revulsions of feelings so dramatically depicted by Hosea in his book. Persistent admonitions and grim warnings produced in Israel some movement towards conversion (Hos. 6:1ff). But Israel's aspirations and assertions do not contain either acknowledgement of sin or prayer for pardon. She envisions God, in baalistic concepts, as the spring rains (Hos. 6:3), her love is half-hearted, falsely conceived and short-lived. Whereas Yahweh's love towards her is like the rising sun, which increases in strength as day advances, Israel's love towards Yahweh is like the morning cloud which vanishes quickly⁵. In this moment of exasperation, God does not pounce on the culprit with mad fury. Instead, the heart of God conflicts within itself and utters a moving soliloquy (Hos. 6:4). On another occasion, in a sad musing over Israel's long history of repeated betrayals, divine anger determines to wipe out the salvation history right upto its strath in Egypt and to hand over Israel to cruel Assyria. Such a punishment would mean to treat Israel as God once treated Sodom, Gomorrah and their parallel cities Admah and Zeboim. This thought of frightful extinction decided for Israel startles God to horror and sorrow. Divine heart recoils and divine compassion gets mightily awakened (Hos. 11:8). Once again the heart of God becomes the arena and object of a violent emotional conflict. At a later period, after Israel had already suffered many a political humiliation, with Assyria almost at her doors for more cruel and drastic depredations, the prophet could search only in vain for a sane change of life in his people. In this gloom of complete helplessness too we hear God's self-questioning as if to justify to himself the inevitability of his annihilating penalty. Compassion is hid from God's eyes because even an almighty God cannot save Israel from the death she is so foolishly and obstinately sinking into (Hos. 13:14).

These soliloquies and self-questionings, so unique in Hosea, bring out the truth that punishment is not an act of divine vindictiveness, but the necessary step thrust upon God by human obduracy. It shows God's repugnance and reluctance to resort to the last but necessitated means of bitter medicinal

punishment. Only a loveless heart can abandon its unfaithful and thankless beloved. God's love, yearning for the return of his strayed people, cannot choose abandon and rejection when scourge and castigation could be tried. The trial of the unfaithful wife, paradigmatically portrayed as a prelude to the teachings of Hosea, climaxes in the oath-like declaration that God will betroth his people to himself for ever. The passionate repetition of the verb "to betroth" gives us the scandalous and blasphemous impression of a God in lust after a perverse and treacherous beloved!

As years passed by, as punishment after punishment proved futile, Hosea became sure of the tragedy and disaster imminent upon Israel. Painfully, yet unequivocally, the prophet foretells what awaits his people: "Samaria shall bear her guilt, because she has rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword, their little ones shall be dashed to pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open" (Hos. 13:16). However, the Book of Hosea ends not in despair and gloom, but with an advice and prayer. What is impossible by the logic of the covenant and by the provisions of the law, is hoped for through prayer. How and wherefrom could the prophet hold out hope in such an utterly hopeless situation? In all likelihood it was the finale of his own matrimonial life that helped him glimpse into the unfathomable and yet sure dynamics of God's love which defies all logic and law for the sake of his beloved.

Hosea Today

At no time in the history of the world has the term and value of LOVE been so adulterated as today. Shrewd ways of exploiting the poor nations pass, in today's diplomatic jargon, for developmental aid. Arms building and the installation of highly dangerous missiles are christened as brotherly protection for the allies. Tyrants rule under democratic systems as well as military regimes. Dabbling in the internal affairs of poor countries, toppling their popular governments with the brutality of money and machine gun, sucking the life-blood of emaciated nations through unjust trade and monetary systems and a hundred and one similar sophisticated barbarities are paraded with slogans and banners depicting love, service, comradeship, defence of democracy and freedom, policing the world order etc

Harlotry, in the Hosean sense of the term, is writ large on the face of all world religions thriving in the politically and socially mangled world of today. Hosea who denounced bloodshed in the valley of Jezreel and announced doom over the bloody dynasty of Jehu (Hos. 1:4) will certainly stand aghast at the macabre and grisly crimes being perpetrated today by a people linked to him by bonds of blood-relationship. Christianity,

the religion that venerates Hosea as one of the canonical prophets in its prestigious inheritance, cannot hope to get acquitted, if tried in an Hosean covenant law-suit. Baals of money and power get their altars in the high places of the Christian church establishment. In this church, as in the days of Hosea, they make purple-attired princes, but not through God; they set mitres on unworthy heads, without the knowledge of God (Hos. 8:1a). Silver and gold are idols in the church, which bring about her decay and disintegration (Hos. 8.4b).

Priests of the church reject knowledge, forget the covenant-law and forsake the Lord to cherish harlotry (Hos 4:6, 10b). They are more interested in church-building than in community-building. As cult functionaries of the church, priests are, in their concrete life-style and activities, offerers of sacrifice rather than promoters of covenantal brotherliness. Their dogmas breed fanaticism and their rites create factions to plague and pester the peace-loving and peace-yearning people at large. Religion lacks interiority; a kind of magical sacramentalism and a huge and hideous variety of pious practices and ceremonies victimize the largely uninstructed lay folk. The more priests increase, the more this meaningless pageantry (Hos 4:7). The priests of today, as those during the time of Hosea, feed on the ignorant church-attendance of the people and are greedy for more feasts, functions and ceremonies (Hos 4:7f).

Exclusive reliance on God is the imperative and condition of authentic faith. Today's church goes freely and frequently to modern Assyrias and Egypts (Hos 7:11) in search of crumbs and morsels, be they political privileges, monetary donations or minority rights. A chicken hearted church leadership stooping and cringing before every party and power, craving for favours, diluting ideals, striking concordats and compromises, ever intent on profit and emolument, makes but a caricature of the church, the divinely sent prophet in this world. Can a contemporary Hosea hold out some hope to this Church?

Foot Notes

1. James M. Ward, *The Prophets*, Nashville 1982, p. 133.
2. For a study of the covenantal law-suit and its structure, cf. Julien Harvey, Le "Rib-Pattern", *Requisitoire prophetique sur la rupture de l'alliance*. *Biblica*, 1962, pp. 172-196.
3. J. M. Ward, op. cit. p. 99.
4. Francis I Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea*. Hosea, N. Y. 1980, p. 187.
5. Ibidem, p. 427.

Semantics of Love

Semantics is the science of meaning¹, and the method that is generally followed by professional semantists is known as componential analysis². No attempt will be made in the present study to apply the principles of componential analysis to the concept of love in the Scriptures, for such a procedure is bound to be dry and jejune, and it has nothing very special to contribute to the overall understanding of the sacred text as such. Our approach here will be the traditional, philological one which, in spite of the criticism levelled against it by modern linguists³, remains the best method when there is question of interpreting ancient texts. We shall first consider the OT and then the NT⁴.

I

The Hebrew Bible employs more than half a dozen bases when it deals with the experience of love in its manifold aspects, and some of these are naturally more significant than the rest. The most important of the bases in question here is *'āhēb* (216 times)⁵, "to love", occurring, though very rarely, also in Ugaritic, Aramaic, Punic and Samaritan⁶, but not in Accadian, Arabic, Ethiopic, etc. The etymology is not clear, and the suggestion that it goes back to the biconsonantal root *hab* (whose existence is postulated on the strength of Arabic *habba*, "to breathe heavily, be excited") does not seem to have anything in its favour; another suggestion is that it is cognate with Arabic *'ihāb*, "skin, liver", but this is again nothing more than a guess.

From the verbal root here mentioned is formed the substantive *'ahābāh*, "love, affection", etc⁷, which, purely from the morphological point of view, is an infinitive and at times takes the place of finite verbal forms (compare Gen 29:20. Dt 7:8 etc.). There are two more substantives which do not have much significance in the OT, *'ōhab* (used in the plural), "joys of love" (Prv 7:8), and *'ahab* (plurale tantum), "gifts of love, charm" (Hos 8:9. Prv 5:19).

It has been pointed out that the meaning of a term is to be found in its use⁸, and so let us cast a cursive glance at the idiomatic expressions in the Hebrew Bible. To begin with, *'āhēb* has as its antonym *śānā'*, "to hate", i.e. not to show predilection/preference, not to be attached to or attracted by some one. Leah, Rachel's elder sister whose eyes lacked lustre and was given in marriage to Jacob by stealth, was *śēnū'āh*, "hated" (Gen 29:31) by her husband; the nature of this hatred is clear from the context of Gen 29:29ff., where it is explicitly stated that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah (v.30). Another antonym of love is *tō'ēbāh*,⁹ "abomination", namely, in the ritual or moral sense,

and there is too implied the nuance of physical repugnance (Ps 88:9; cf. Gen 46:34) vis-à-vis the person or thing one does not love. A very interesting instance of the antithesis here is furnished by the Qumran hymns: "...what you love, and to regard as abomination all that you hate" (IQH XVI:10f.).¹⁰ A third antonym is *mā'as*, "to reject, despise", whose use in the Qumran texts is specially noteworthy. A man joins the community in order to love all that God has chosen and to hate all that *mā'as*, "he has rejected" (IQS 1:3f.)

The Hebrew Bible attests a number of synonyms of the verb *'āhēb*, the most remarkable of which is *dābaq*, "to cling to, cleave to, adhere to".¹¹ According to the Deuteronomic preachers, Israel has to love Yahweh by listening to his voice and by clinging to him (20:20); the chosen nation has to love Yahweh by walking in his ways and by clinging to him (11:22). Prov 18:24 is typical: "There is a friend¹² who clings closer than a brother." A second synonym is *rādap*, "to follow after, pursue"; compare Is 1:23, where the leaders of the chosen nation are said to love bribes and run after gifts. Here belongs too *hālak 'ahārē*, "to go after"; Jer 2:25b represents Israel as saying: "I love these strangers, and after them I must go." The two synonyms here cited have naturally the pejorative sense, but evidently they can have too the positive meaning. The verb *bāqas*, "to seek", is another synonym. The impious love that is vain and seek after what is futile (Ps 4:3); all those who seek Yahweh shall rejoice and exult in him, and those who love his salvation confess without interruption that he is great (Ps 40:7). The last synonym we wish to consider here is *māsak*, "to draw, drag"; Yahweh has loved his people with an ever lasting love, and he has therefore drawn them to him in *hesed*, "steadfast love" (Jer 31:3); he continues to draw them with cords of *hesed*, and with bands of love (Hos 11:4). There are a couple of other verbs more which appear in parallelism with *'āhēb*, and they will be studied in the course of the ensuing discussions.

Love, from the point of view of the OT, can mean God's love for man, man's response to this love, and also his love for his neighbour, and the base we have been analysing denotes all these three varieties of love. As for the rendering of *'āhēb* in the Septuagint, we wish to point out here that the usual equivalent is *agapaō* (cf. Section II), and only rarely do the translators employ *phileō*, *philiazō* and *eraomai*.

The next Hebrew word to be analysed is *hesed* (245 times),¹³ the remarkable thing about which is that it has no verbal root.¹⁴ nor has it any cognates in Ugaritic, Arabic, Accadian, etc. The term never occurs in some of the books of the canon (e.g. Leviticus, 2 Kings, Proverbs, Ezekiel, etc.), but it is well attested

in the Psalms (127 times) and in the Chronicler's work (23 times); the form that is generally used is the singular, the plural being found only 18 times. Once there occurs the combination *'ahābat hesed* (Mic 6:8), where the first word is a modification of *'ahābāh*, "love". Two phrases deserve to be specially cited here. There occurs 16 times the combination *hesed we'emet*, "steadfast love and fidelity" (Gen 24:27. Ps 25:10. 40:11f. 57:4. 61:8 etc.), where the second term has the force of an adjective, and the sense therefore is that the *hesed* of which there is question is reliable, firm, lasting.¹⁵ The other combination is *berit wēhesed* (Dt 7:9. 12. 2 Sam 7:15. 1kg 3:6. 8:23 etc.), which describes the covenant as something characterized by steadfast love.

What exactly is the nature of the love implied by the term? It stands for the special bond of love existing between friends (1 Sam 20:8. 2 Sam 9:1), guests and hosts (Gen 19:19), rulers and subjects (2 Sam 3:8), father and son (Gen 47: 29), and husband and wife (Gen 20:13). In a passage dealing with matrimonial love this substantive occurs in parallelism with *'āhābāh* (Jer 2:2). There is too the idiomatic expression *'āsāh hesed* (where the first word is the verb "to do / make"), and in this case there is question of a man's dealings with others. Abimelek requests Abraham to deal with him "according to the *hesed* which I have done to you" (Gen 21:25); Rahab tells the spies despatched by Joshua: "I have done you *hesed*, and now you shall also do *hesed* with the house of my father" (Jos 2:12).

In some passages *'āsāh hesed* is followed by the dative preposition *le*, "to, for, for the sake of, on behalf of", and in these instances the subject of the verb is God: Yahweh does *hesed* to thousands (Ex 20:6, Dt 5:10; Jer 32:18). The Qumran texts employ the term we have been discussing about 60 times, and practically half of the passages where it is to be found belong to the book of hymns proper to the community. The poet closely follows the traditions of the Bible; compare: "By your great *hesed* you have strengthened the spirit of man" (IQH 1:32). The Septuagint renders *hesed* most of the time as *eleos* (213 times), whence we have in the Vulgate *misericordia*; from among the other equivalents found in the Greek version we may cite *eleēmosunē* (6 times), *dikaïosunē* (8 times), and *charis* (twice).

The third Hebrew base to be discussed here is *rāham*, "to love, show compassion", which is common Semitic, found in all the languages of the family with the exception of Ethiopic.¹⁶ The simple base just cited is to be met with only once (Ps 18:2), and it is doubtful whether the reading is genuine.¹⁷ The stem that is most often used is the active intensive one, *rīham*, and before we study it we wish to recall here that Hebrew attests the substantive *reham*, "womb", and its plural *rahamim*, "maternal

feeling, compassion" (literally, "intestines"), but since the relation of the word here to the root cited above is not at all clear, we exclude it from our discussions.¹⁸ Six times is *riham* used of man (1Kg 8:50 Is 13:16. 49:15. Jer 6:23. 42:12. 50:42) and 32 times of God; it is very rare in the Psalms (102:14. 103:13. 116:5), and most of the instances are in the books of the prophets, especially of Isaiah (10 times) and Jeremiah (6 times). An adjectival form of *rāham* occurring 13 times in the Hebrew Bible is *rahûm*, "loving, compassionate", and only once is it used of man (Ps 112:4); it has as its parallel *hannûn*, "gracious, showing favour,"²⁰ and the two expressions form a fixed pair, serving as a description of Yahweh who is ever ready to hear the pious man's prayer and pardon men their sins (Ex 34:6. Ps 86:15. 103:8. 111:4 145:8 etc.). It goes without saying that these activities of the Lord are expressions of the love he has for man. In the Septuagint the usual equivalent of *riham* is *eleēō*, and only seldom do the translators render it as *agapaō*.

We now come to two bases which convey the idea of finding pleasure in a person or a thing and as such are semantically very close, namely, *hāpēs* (70 times) and *rāsāh* (51 times). The first root, "to take pleasure, find delight", occurs in Phoenician, Arabic, etc. but not in Accadian, Ugaritic, etc., and it attests too an adjectival form (12 times), "delighting in, finding pleasure in", as well as a substantive (39 times), "delight, pleasure" (in someone or something). The verbal base denotes the delight the male finds in women (Gen 34:19. Dt 21:14. Est 2:14), and thrice it is used in the Song of Songs with reference to the bride's sleep of love (2:7 3:5.8:4). In relation to God *hāpēs* has both the negative and positive sense; thus he does not find delight in the blood of bulls (Is 1:11), in the death of the sinner (Ez 18:23.32), and so on, and positively his delight is in Israel (Num 14:8), in David (2Sam 22:20), in Solomon (1Kg 10:9), in Jerusalem (Is 62:4), in the pious man (Ps 22:9. 41:12), in mercy, justice and righteousness (Jer 9:23).

God's mysterious designs are indicated with the help of the noun form *hāpes*: his good pleasure (or cause, or business) will prosper in the hands of his anonymous suffering servant (Is 53:10), and what the context points to here is the servant's work of making atonement for the sins of both Jews and gentiles. The Qumran sectarians too employ the verb and the substantive we have been studying, but they cannot be said to be part of the basic theological vocabulary of the group.²² The usual rendering of the verbal base in the Septuagint is *ethelō*, other equivalents include *boulomai*, *bouleuomai*, *prosdechomai*, *eudokeō*, and finally also *agapaō*.

We shall now analyse the verb *rāsāh*, "to be pleased with,

accept favourably"; it has its cognates in Arabic, Aramaic, etc., and can have as its subject both God and man, but in a very special way it is predicated of Yahweh. Prv 3:12 is typical, inasmuch as the verb occurs in parallelism with *āhāb*: "For whom the Lord loves he reproves and he chastises the son with whom *yirśēh*."²³ Sir 46:13 is no less noteworthy as it uses in parallelism the passive participles *‘āhub* and *rāsuy*: Samuel was loved by his people and favourably accepted by God.²⁴ From *rāsāh* is formed the abstract noun *rāsōn* (35 times)²⁵, "good will, good pleasure, favour, will", which is primarily poetical and used of God as well as of man (Prv 10:32. 11:27. 14:9 etc.). On Joseph is betowed the favour of Yahweh, the one who dwells in the burning bush (Dt 33:16); the Lord who has smitten Jerusalem in his wrath, has now shown her mercy²⁶ in his good will (Is 60:11). The psalmists celebrate God's *rāsōn*: he surrounds the righteous man with the shield of his good will (5:12); his anger lasts but a moment but his goodwill a lifetime (30:6); the pious man feels that in his goodwill Yahweh has endowed him with majesty and strength (30:8).²⁷

We must, for our survey to be somewhat complete, cite here the verb *hābab*, "to love" corresponding to Arabic *habba*.³⁰ The verb is a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible, and the form that is attested is the active participle *hōbēb*: Yahweh loves his people (Dt 33:3).³¹

The last verb to be discussed here is *‘āgab*, signifying lustful love; compare the substantives *‘āgāb*, "sensuous love" (Ex 33:31f.), and *‘āgābāh*, "lustfulness" (Ez 23:11). The verb occurs just once in the book of Jeremiah (4:20), and six times in the book of Ezekiel in a special chapter describing Israel's sinfulness (23:5. 7. 9. 12. 16. 20); that which the verb stands for is the unlawful relations of Samaria and Jerusalem with foreigners. Understandably enough, in the Septuagint the present verb is translated *eraō* and *eraomai*.

We have briefly surveyed the vocabulary of love in the Hebrew Scriptures, and of the verbs studied above the most important doubtless is *‘āhāb*, which does describe love in all its different aspects. There is man's love for the woman, which is celebrated in glowing terms by the authors of the Song of Songs,³² and there is also man's love for his neighbour which is strictly enjoined by ancient Israelite law: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev 19:18).³³ The chosen nation's relationship with Yahweh, the author of the covenant, is thus defined by the Deuteronomic preachers: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Dt 6:5).³⁴ In conclusion, love it is that guides and governs Yahweh's dealings with his people, and there is not the least

exaggeration in saying that the entire history of salvation is a disclosure of God's love.

Love as an integral part of human experience here on earth reveals itself as kindness, benevolence, good pleasure, delight in the other, and so on, and lastly it may appear also as sex perversion. All these facets of love are highlighted by *hesed*, *rāham*, etc. God bestows his love on man, and men, in close conjunction with his neighbour, enjoys this love: this is in short the semantics of *'ahēb*, etc. in the Hebrew Bible.³⁵

II

Monographs and articles dealing with the concept of love in the NT are legion, which is the topic discussed in this issue of *Jeevadhara*. Our endeavour in this section will therefore be to examine the NT vocabulary of love from the historical and philological point of view. Pre-biblical Greek employs three verbs when there is question of love, *eraō*, *phileō* and *agapaō*; a few words about the first verb are in place here, for, though the NT ignores it, it is part of the vocabulary of the Septuagint.

The verbal base *eraō* stands for love in its passionate and sensuous aspects,³⁶ and there is in classical Greek the word *erōn*, "(passionate) lover", as correlative of *erōmenē*, "the beloved one, the passionately loved one": compare too the phrase *eran erōtica*, "to love erotics". In Greek mythology there is a muse named *Eratō*, and *Erōs* is the god of love.

To illustrate the use of *eraō* in Greek, we cite here a couple of lines from the Homeric epics.³⁷ *Hos seo eramai kai me glukus himeros hairei* (Iliad 3:446), "As I love you now, and sweet desire takes hold of me." In a section where Zeus is recounting his amours, we read: *hopot' ērasamēn Ixionies alochoio* (Iliad 14:317), "Not when I loved the wife of Ixion." The god Eros appears as the one who arouses the passion of love:³⁸ *erōs me phrenas ampehekalupsen* (Iliad 3:442), "Eros has enwrapped my heart." The meaning 'to be fond of, long for', is also clearly attested: *hos polemou eratai* (Iliad 9:64), "He who is fond of strife" (is wicked, lawless).

As regards the etymology of *eraō*, what we have to say is that it has no proper Indo-European base, and none of the suggestions that have so far been made is beyond objection.³⁹ Once we bear in mind the pejorative connotations the verb had in popular speech, we can understand why it has not found a place in the NT.

The next verb, *phileō*, "to love, have affection, like", and also "to kiss", so as to give concrete expression to one's internal (5)

feeling of love. The verb is Homeric,⁴⁰ showing a rich variety of nuances, such as "to hold in affection, favour, treat with hospitality, take pleasure in", etc.; compare *ouk est'eme kai se philemenai* (Iliad 22:265), "It is impossible for you and for me to be friends." The verb does refer to the regard the powers on high have for men: *amphō homōs thumōi phileousa* (Iliad 1:196), "(the goddess Hera) whose heart loved both alike"; *ephilato Pallas Athēnē* (Iliad 5:61), "Pallas Athene loved" (him more than all men). Unlawful love is at times described with the help of *phileō*: it is used of Amnitor who was mad after a lovely-haired (*kallokomoio*) concubine, *tēn autos phileesken* (Iliad 9:450), "whom he ever loved". The erotic aspect of the verbal root remains alien to the NT.

Historically speaking *phileō* is a derivative of *philos* which is both substantive ("friend") and adjective ("friendly")⁴, and it is idiomatic in Greek to use the masculine vocative form *phile'* with neuter nouns: *phile teknon* (Iliad 22:84), "dear son". In Homer the adjective serves to convey the idea "suus, tuus, what is one's own" (life, wife, and so forth): *philon d'exainuto thumon* (Iliad 5:848), "he took away dear life"; *philēn agesthai* (Iliad 6:150), "to take as one's wife". The adjectival form is quite common as part of compounds: *philo-xeinos*, "friendly to guests", *philo-phrōn*, "friendly minded", *philo-mmeidos*, "laughter-loving", *polu-philos*, "dear to many", *theo-philos*, etc. We must also cite here the substantives *philotēs* and *philia*, which are well attested; the former occurs in Homer but the latter: "But come now, *philotēti trapeiomen* (Iliad 3:442), let us have the joy of love".

In the light of Indo European philology we can analyse *philos* either as *phi-lo-* or as *ph-il (o)-*, with a formative suffix *l(o)-*, derived from the prehistorical age⁴². The etymology remains obscure, though the likelihood is that it is cognate with the Celtico-Germanic adjective *bil-/bili-*, going back to Indo-European *bhil-/bhilo-*, "to be friendly", compare the Gallic personal names *Bili-catus* and *Bili-cius*⁴³; here belong too Old High German *bila* (later form *bili*), "good, acceptable", *bil-līch*. "becoming, seemly". *bile-wicz* (= Anglo-Saxon *bile-wit*), "good spirit", etc⁴⁴.

Now the voiced aspirate *bh* of the parent Indo-European tongue becomes *ph* in Greek; compare:⁴⁵

<i>bherō</i>	(= Sanskrit <i>bharāmi</i>)	:	Greek	<i>pherō</i>
<i>nebhos</i>	(„ <i>nabhas-</i>)	:	„	<i>nephos</i>
<i>bhrāter</i>	(„ <i>bhrāter</i>)	:	„	<i>phrāter</i>

Theoretically speaking, therefore, the Indo-European base *bhilos* can yield Greek *philos*.

Lydian, an Indo-European language of Anatolia⁴⁶, attests the form *bilis*, "his, her", from *bi-*, "he", which has been reg-

arded as a cognate of *philos*⁴⁷, but the connection here postulated, though theoretically possible, remains problematic. A very ingenious suggestion is that *philos* is related to Slavic *milj*⁴⁸, "dear, loved, beloved" (cf. *milostj*, "love, favour, grace"); compare the idiomatic expression in Russian *eto ochenj milo s Vashei storony*, "It is very nice on your part". The change of *bh* to *m* in the Slavic languages is clearly attested⁴⁹, and hence we get the equation *bhilos* = Greek *philos*, but Proto-Slavic *milos*, but the proposal seems to be too subtle to be true.

The last verb to be discussed here is *agapaō* which is of paramount importance for the NT. From the point of view of the early history of the Greek language the verb has not much significance, as is borne out by the fact that it occurs just twice in Homer⁵⁰. There is also in Homer a secondary formation *agapazō*, "to love", and also "to play the host"; compare *hos de patēr hon paida phila phroneōn agapazei* (Odyssey 16:17), "even as a loving father welcomes his dear son". An epithet of the heroes is *agapēnōr*, "showing kindness to men, courteous", and lastly there is the participial formation *agapātos*, "beloved, darling".

The root *agapaō* has no clear etymology, and a derivation that is theoretically possible is *aga-paō*, where the initial element can be understood as the Greek modification of Indo-European *mga-*, "very much, much", from the base *meg* (*h*)-, "to be much, great", etc.⁵¹, surviving in Greek *megas*, Latin *magnus*, Sanskrit *mahā-*, etc. As for *paō*, it will mean "to get, acquire, possess" (cf. *paomai*), and *agapaō* will then point to a love that is all-possessive, tending fully to its object, going out of the subject to its object.

Of the three Greek verbs surveyed here, *erōs* signifies sensible and sensuous love which seeks the fulfilment of its own craving in others, and which therefore is self-centred, and interested in the other insofar as he (or she) satisfies the subject's need. The type of experience described by *phileō* is "love which embraces everything that bears a human countenance", so that its occurrence in the NT is not anything surprising⁵². As has already been noted, *agapaō* was not of any importance in the literary tradition of ancient Greece, for no poet or thinker has ever bothered to delve deep into its nature, something which is most surprising when we remember that *erōs* and *philia* were the objects of intense reflection. It is only in the Septuagint that the verb acquires a theological nuance, which is a story that need not be told here. It functions too as a synonym of the other two verbs, but the main element in it is making distinctions and choosing, i.e. showing some sort of preference, and it has therefore the nuance "to show love"; *agapē* is a giving,

active love on the other's behalf"⁵³: no wonder, then, that the sacred writers adopted it as the expression most suited to define the very essence of the message proclaimed by the Scriptures.

Foot Notes

1. K. Luke, "Semantics and Hermeneutics", *Journal of Dharma* 5 (1980) pp. 30-37 (with bibliographical indications).

2. Luke, *ibid.*, pp. 24-31.

3. All the shortcomings of this approach are mercilessly exposed and criticized in H. Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic* (Oxford, 1981) pp. 103-10, 176-206. For the professional philologist's point of view, cf. L. R. Palmer, *Descriptive and Comparative Linguistics* (repr., London, 1978) pp. 13-26.

4. The theme of love figures in the literatures of Egypt and Mesopotamia, but a discussion of it is out of question in this modest study.

5. Exhaustive discussions in *Theologisches Wörterbuch Zum Alten Testament* (Stuttgart, 1973ff.) I, cols. 105-28 (for statistics, cf. col. 108); cf. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1962 ff.) I, pp. 21-35.

6. *Theologisches Wörterbuch* I, cols. 108 f.

7. Cf. H. Bauer-P. Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache des Alten Testaments* (repr., Hildesheim, 1962) § 43g (p. 317); § 61w" (p. 463)

8. For this point of view, cf. J. J. Katz, *Semantic Theory* (New York, 1972) p. 8; cf. too Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic*, pp. 129 f., 188 f.

9. The word occurs in Phoenician, but its etymology remains problematic; cf. L. Koehler-W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden, 1953) p. 1022.

10. K. G. Kuhn, *Konkordanz zu den Qumrantexten*. Göttingen, 1960.

11. This verb, found also in Arabic, Aramaic etc., occurs only in J and D sources, with a single exception in Num 36:7.9 (P); it is part of the special vocabulary of the Deuteronomic preachers.

12. In the original *ʾohēb*, which is the active participle of *ʾāhēb*.

13. There is no single word in English which can bring out the full of meaning implied by this term; "loving kindness, steadfast love, goodness, kindness", piety" etc. can be used as its equivalents. Detailed study of the word in *Theologisches Wörterbuch* III, cols. 48-71.

14. Only once is the verbal root *hāsad* used in the entire Hebrew Bible (Ps 18:26).

15. The reader should realize that *ʾēmet* is a derivative of *ʾāman*, "to confirm, support", and the celebrated expression Amen (*ʾāmēn*) is itself an adverb created from it ("verily, truly").

In idiomatic usage the substantive has the force of an adjective ("true, faithful, reliable") and adverb ("in truth, truly").

16. The equivalent in Accadian is *rāmu* whose subject can be both gods and men.

17. The whole verse seems to be secondary, for it is not to be found in the parallel recension occurring in 2 Sam 22 (cf. v. 2).

18. The expression can certainly be counted as a synonym of *'āhēb*, accentuating one particular aspect of love, namely, compassion, sympathy.

20. From the *hānan*, "to show favour", which can very well be counted as a synonym of *'āhēb*; on the root, cf. *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* III, cols. 23-40.

22. Special mention must be made here of the combination of *hēpeš* with *rāṣôn*, "will, good pleasure".

23. The word in Hebrew is a finite form of the root under discussion.

24. I. Lèvi, *The Hebrew Text of the Book of Ecclesiasticus* (Semitic Study Series 3, repr., Leiden, 1969) p. 64. The manuscript has *'ôhēb* which is the active participle, but the form demanded by the context is the passive one.

25. The formation here in *-ôn* (from *-ān*) is a descriptive one, and is quite common in Hebrew; it denotes too abstract ideas, agent nouns, adjectives and diminutives; cf. Bauer-Leander. *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache*, p. 498 (§ 61).

26. In the original *rihmatī*, from *riham*.

27. The equivalents in the Septuagint are *eudokeō* and *agapao*, and at times also *prosdechomai* and *paradechomai*.

30. Compare the common Moslem name Habib/Habibullah ("beloved of Allah").

31. The Hebrew text literally means "amans populos" (i. e. the gentiles), but the reading "his people" has the support of the Septuagint which preserves *'ammō*, *laos autou*. On the textual problem, cf. S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy* (The International Critical Commentary, repr., Edinburgh, 1951) pp. 393 f.

32. Luke, "Human Love: the Tradition of the Old Testament". *Jeevadhara* 48 (1978) pp. 413-31.

33. G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (The New international Commentary on the Old Testament, Grand Rapids, 1979) pp. 366-69.

34. Driver, *ibid*, pp. 91f. Interesting observations in W. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy", *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963) pp. 77-87.

35. Two more verbs are to be cited here, since they too in their own way describe some aspects of love. The first is *hāsaq* (8 times), "to be attached to", and hence also "to love"; the second is *bāhar* (176 times), "to choose, elect"; choice is impossible apart from preferential love.

36. H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Indogermanische Bibliothek. I. Reihe: Wörterbücher, Heidelberg, 1973ff.) I, p. 547.

37. R. J. Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* (repr., Norman, Okl., 1963) p. 154.

38. W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion*. Die Religionen der Menschheit 15, Stuttgart, 1976. For all practical purposes, cf. *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* (London, 1974) pp. 83, 86, 132, etc. J. Phinsent, *Greek Mythology* (London, 1969) pp. 19, 43.

39. Ohne "Etymologie" (Frisk, *ibid.*); compare J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern, 1959-69) I, p. 336. On the formation of the substantive *erōs*, cf. E. Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik*. I. Allgemeiner Teil. Lautlehre, Wortbildung, Flexion (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft II. Abt., I. Teil. I. Band, 4th ed, Munich, 1968) p. 514 (*ibid.* n. 4).

40. Cunliffe, *ibid.*, pp. 408f.

41. Frisk, *Wörterbuch II*, pp. 1018-20.

42. Frisk, *ibid.* p. 1019. 43. Pokorny, *ibid.*, pp. 153f.

44. For the forms in Germanic. cf. F. Kluge-W. Mitzka, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (20th ed., Berlin, 1967) pp. 76f. 803.

45. This is something that is a part, strictly speaking, of professional Indo-European philology, which is discussed exhaustively in K. Brugmann-B. Dellbrück, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen* (repr., Berlin, 1967) I/1. pp. 506f.. Schwyzer, *ibid.*, pp. 296-98.

46. On the languages of ancient Anatolia or Asia Minor (= modern Asiatic Turkey), cf. Luke, "Anatolian Languages", *The Living Word* 84 (1978) pp. 147-72 (cf. pp. 153f.). Elaborate discussions in V. I. Georgiev, *Introduzione alla storia della lingua indoeuropea* (Incunabula Graeca 9, repr., Rome, 1966) pp. 222-51.

47. R. Gusmani, *Lydisches Wörterbuch mit grammatikalischer Skizze und Inschriftensammlung* (Indogermanische Bibliothek. I. Reihe: Lehr- und Handbücher, Heidelberg, 1964) pp. 80f.

48. M. Vasmer, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Indogermanische Bibliothek. II. Reihe: Wörterbücher, repr., Heidelberg, 1979) II, p. 134; cf. too Pokorny, *Wörterbuch*, p. 712.

49. H. Bräuer, *Slavische Sprachenwissenschaft*. II. Formenlehre (Sammlung Götschen, Berlin, 1969) pp. 26f.

50. Cunliffe. *Lexicon*, p.2. 51 Pokorny, *ibid.*, p. 708.

52. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* I, p. 36.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Bhakti – a Sadhana for Mukti

“Love the Lord, your God with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your heart and with all your strength” – admonishes the sacred bible. This loving the Lord with (all one's soul, with all one's mind, with all one's heart and with) all one's strength is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the *Bhakti* cult in India. The term 'Bhakti' is normally translated into English as 'Devotion'. But the concept of Bhakti of hinduism implies more than the notion of devotion of christian spirituality. Bhakti is the intense uncompromising and unslackening love of God, which lifts up the devotee – the individualself – from the realm of *prakṛit* and unites him with the God – *Paramātmā* – of his love.

Bhakti Tradition

Naturally the true bhaktic aspiration of the human soul arose together with the origin of the true monotheism, that is to say, Bhakti implies always the notion of one personal God. And in fact it is the sages and saints of the epics and purāṇas (500 B.C. – 500 A.D.) who advocated Bhakti for the first time as the sure means of salvation. The Upaniṣads, which perhaps form the very cream of the sacred literature of hinduism, reacted vehemently against the polytheism of the *vedas* and the arid ritualism of the *brāhmaṇas*, and went to the other extreme and said that the reality is one without a second. They designated this one reality as *Brahman* or *Parabrahman*, *Ātman* or *Paramātmā*. This reality is the Supreme, the Absolute, and is without form or name or attributes¹. *Avidyā* is the cause of bondage. Intuitive, experiential knowledge is the only means at the disposal of the individual self, which in fact is only a reflection of this one Reality, in order to get rid of the cycles of birth, death and rebirth². Consequently the upaniṣads depict man as *Brahmajijñāsu*, one who intensely desires to know Brahman.

It is against this absolutist, abstract notion of the religion of the *upaniṣads*, and to a certain extent against the rapid expansion of buddhism, that the epics and puranas became popular. The religion of the upanisads could never satisfy the psychological need of man for religion. The religious philosophy of the epics and puranas propagated the idea of a personal God who is loving and kind, and is ever ready to come down to his devotee to liberate him by his grace³. The *Summum Bonum* of man is to attain the abode – the *paramapada* – of this God. This God, be it Viṣṇu or Siva, is identified with the Brahman of the upaniṣads. The only means the epics and puranas put forward for salvation is the *Bhaktiyoga*. Some of the excellent works ever written on Bhakti were produced in this period. The epic *Ramayana*, parts

of the epic *Mahabharata*, especially the *Gita*, the puranas like *Mahābhāgavata* and *Viṣṇupurana* are examples of classical works on Bhakti.

History repeats itself. In the 8th century A. D. the great Sankaracarya revived the monism of the upanisads. It seems that his great preoccupation was to defeat buddhism, which denied all realities (*sarvam kṣanikam*). In this desperate endeavour he wanted to establish the existence of at least one reality. He divided the existence into three categories: (i) The *prātibhasikam sat* (that is the illusory reality), (ii) The *vyāvahārikam sat* (that is the empirical reality) and (iii) The *Pāramārthikam sat* (that is the true Reality). Only the *pāramārthikam sat* has real existence and that is Brahman. The nature of this Brahman is pure consciousness and is without any attributes (*Nirviśeṣacinmātram* Brahma). He stoutly denied the need and relevance of Bhakti and Karma for salvation and very ardently declared that the sole *sādhana* for *mukti* knowledge (*Jñānat mukti*).

Many eminent acāryas and learned sages strongly opposed and effectively tried to refute the impersonal absolutism of Sankaracarya and the advaita philosophers. New Bhakti movements sprang up and they relentlessly endeavoured to spread the Bhaktic aspect of religion. Many beautiful treatises on Bhakti appeared in this period (8th century A.D. to 14th). Many acaryas of vedanta tried to give the Bhakti cult a philosophical foundation. This rediscovery of the importance of Bhakti in the religious philosophy of India becomes a great movement in the religious history of India. Some of the important works of this period are:

(1) *Sāṅdilya Bhakti Sutra*, (2) *Narada Bhakti Sutra*, (3) *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*, (4) *Nāṭayiraprabandha* of the Alvars of Tamil Nadu etc.

The great text books of Bhakti like Ramayana, Mahābhāgavata, Gita etc. were rediscovered and reinterpreted and popularized. Saints and mystics like the Alvars and Nayammars in Tamil Nadu, Kabir, Rai Das Tulasidas and others in Maharashtra, Caitanya and Jiva Gosami in Bengal, Vallabha and Gosainji in Gujarat have greatly contributed to the spread of this Bhakti movement. The great acaryas and philosophers of different systems of Vedanta like Sri Ramanuja, Madhva and Caitanya could build up the philosophy of *Bhaktimārga* and provide rational explanations for the *Bhaktisādhana*.

Bhakti, Bhagavan and Bhagavata

The word 'Bhakti' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'Bhaj' which means in the first place to adore, to serve, to love (*bhaj*)

sevāyām). It also means to share, divide and to be attached to. So Bhakti means the loving adoration of the deity, which involves the intense desire of the *Bhakta* to be attached to the divinity and share in the divine life. The concept of Bhakti also involves the total and irrevocable self-surrender from the part of the *Bhakta*. The great Bhakti theoretician Narada define Bhakti in two of his *sūtras*. "That (Bhakti). indeed, is of the nature of the supreme love of God." "And the intrinsic nature of the divine Love is that it is in the form of immortal bliss."⁴ Sandilya says: "It is the absolute love for God."⁵ The definition of *Bhāgavatapurana* is interesting. It says: "When all energies of the mind, including those of the organs of knowledge and of action, become concentrated as a unified mental mode directed to the supreme Being, spontaneous like an instinct and devoid of any extraneous motives, the resulting state of mind is called Bhakti. It is superior even to *Mukti*. Like fire it burns up the soul's sheath of ignorance."⁶ Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu says: "*Rāga* is the spontaneous outpour of the heart's love towards the object of its desire"⁷. Ramanuja, the architect of the Viśiṣṭādvaita vedanta, says: "The continuous meditation (on God) with great love is called Bhakti."⁸ He also describes Bhakti in the following manner: "It is an uninterrupted remembrance of the Lord like the continuous flow of oil."⁹ All the later attempts to define and describe Bhakti do not differ much from these definitions.

Some authors of the Bhakti movement extolled Bhakti to the extent that it is no more a means to get rid of *samsāra*, but is the very goal itself. Bhakti is to be practised for its own sake. The *bhakta* cares not for his liberation. His *summum bonum* is Bhakti at the feet of the Lord itself. "What we call gratitude has no place in a spirit like this. 'God has given me so many things to enjoy, I should therefore love Him' - there is no room for such a sentiment. Gratitude premises a solicitude for the things received, and devotion of the type we are dealing with must betray not the slightest trace of a desire for anything but God himself."¹⁰ Kulaśekhara-perumal, one of the Alvars, expresses this beautifully in his *Mukundamāla*. He does not adore the feet of the Lord in order to get rid of the pain and miseries of this world, he does not pray the Lord in order to avoid hell, nor does he pray for securing the pleasures of paradise. But he says: "Allow me to meditate on you in my innermost heart in all my births." He says further: "I don't have any desire for Dharma, nor do I care for great wealth nor for the enjoyment of pleasures. Let my future be according to my *karma*. But I do pray for this; may the Bhakti which I have for your lotus feet be firm and steadfast in all my future births."¹¹ Ramaprasada, a great Viṣṇu devotee of Bengal, says: "Devotion sitteth as the queen, salvation is but her maid of honour."¹²

Total self-surrender at the feet of the Lord is an essential element for the perfection and fruition of Bhaktisādhana. The aspirant has to take refuge in God alone for commencing the Bhaktiyoga, for getting over the obstacles on the path of Bhakti, for rising to the higher horizons of Bhakti and finally to enjoy the vision of the Lord eternally at his *paramapada*. The total and firm self-surrender, which also is the essential element of the *Prapattiyoga*, involves three things: (i) The *Svarūpasamarpana* - the Bhakta realizes that he lives, moves and has his being in Brahman and that he belongs to Brahman only; (ii) *Bhārasamarpana* - the responsibility of one's salvation is placed on God. The devotee knows that he is incapable of self protection; (iii) *Phala-samarpana* - this consists in the abandonment of the desire in the fruits of one's actions and life. The Gita declares this fact thus: "Seek refuge with Him alone, O Arjuna, with all your heart. Through His grace, you will obtain supreme peace and eternal abode."¹³

The response of the *Bhagavān* - the Lord -¹⁴ to such a Bhakti is generous and beyond limits. This generosity of the Lord in its extreme form expresses itself as '*Bhaktaparādhinatā*', that is, He is always at the disposal of the devotee like a servant. God, who is omnipotent, puts aside his divine justice, and being overpowered by mercy desires for the union with the individual self. "Thus we find that God has two kinds of relationships towards man's activities: (i) He is the *karmādhyakṣa* who is an impartial judge. He gives freedom of choice to the individual souls to act and apportions to them the fruits of their respective actions, good or bad (ii) He is an ocean of infinite mercy. He manifests Himself in the universe to redeem man from the shackles of *samsāra*. He delights in saving His *śeṣas* from misery. God's action in saving man is motivated not by any obligation to do so but by His supreme compassion."¹⁴ In fact the supreme Lord of Vaisnavism takes different forms for the benefit of the devotees. He empties himself and takes even the form of an animal or enters into a piece of stone so that thus he can serve and save his Bhaktas. Thus according to the vaisnavism of *Pāñcarātra-Agamas* the Lord Viṣṇu assumes five forms. (i) The *Para* form which resides in the *Paramapada* as the absolute, supreme being, the Lord of the universe. (ii) The *Vyūha* forms like *Saṅgharṣṇa*, *Anirudha* and *Pradyumana*. The devotee should meditate on each of these forms with particular attributes like *Jnana*, *Bala*, *Aisvarya* etc. which are assigned to these forms. (iii) *Vibhava*. The ten avatars of Viṣṇu, which he takes to resuscitate Dharma (*Dharmasamstapanaya*) and to save his votaries (*Paritrāṇāya sadhunam*)¹⁵. (iv) The *Antaryāmin* - The indwelling presence of the Lord. God resides in the heart of each of His Bhakta as the inner self and controller. This divine immanence

of the supreme Reality in the cave of the heart of the devotee is a great act of His infinite compassion. (v) The *Arcāvalāra*. The self-emptying of the absolute Brahman is total. So that the Bhaktas of all epochs could at all times approach Him for adoration and worship, he assumes the forms of images. The *avalāras* are in particular periods and for particular purposes, but the presence of God in consecrated image is permanent and is accessible to one and all.

The *Bhāgavatas* or the *Bhaktas* are those who have decided for the love of God over all the mundane pleasures and benefits. As Bhakti is of various kinds, the Bhaktas are also of different types. Gita classifies them into four groups¹⁶. The *Artha* bhaktas are those who aspire again for the wealth that they have lost. The second category of Bhaktas are *Artharthins*, who want to acquire riches newly. The *Jijñāsus*, according to the interpretation of Ramanuja, are those who aspire to realize the pure nature of the individual self. And the last group, the group of the real Bhaktas, are *Jñānins*, who want to love God and to be united with Him by all means and at any cost. A *Jñānin* is eternally devoted to God. He is, in the language of Gita, *Nityayukta* - eternally attached to God. For him the Lord is both the goal (*puruṣārtha*) and the means (*Hita*). He is an *ekāntin*, that is he is solely directed to the *Bhagavan* with undivided love, and has no other objects to be obtained in life. Lord Kṛṣṇa praises such a devotee as a *Mahātman*¹⁷.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the hindu theology of Bhakti is that it sometimes depicts the Bhakta and *Bhagavān* as equals, and sometimes the Bhakta is pictured even greater than God himself. We have seen that the concept of Bhakti is extolled and exaggerated beyond limits that Bhakti of the individual self becomes more important than salvation of the soul itself. This happens here too. The devotee who is the recipient of the grace of God turns out to be the lord of the Lord. Commenting on Gita VII. 18, Ramanuja says that Paramātmān cannot survive without the Bhakta and that the Bhakta is his very self. "But My conviction is that the man of wisdom is My very self. I regard myself as depending on him for My support and sustenance". It is said that of all adorations, the adoration of Viṣṇu is noble. But the adoration of the devotees of Viṣṇu is still nobler¹⁸.

The story of Ambariṣa of Mahabhāgavata¹⁹ is interesting in this respect. Ambariṣa was a zealous and unassuming devotee of Viṣṇu. Once the quicktempered Sage Durvasa planned to humiliate this saint. Viṣṇu himself came to the rescue of the votary and sent his weapon *cakra* to chase Durvasa. He ran for his life and supplicated Brahma and Siva for protection. But they

expressed their inability to help him. Finally he took refuge at the feet of Visnu himself. But Visnu told him that he too is incapable of helping him. The only way opened to the sage is to take refuge in the kindness of Ambarisa himself. So *Bhagavan* and *Bhagavata* are to be worshipped equally.

Bhakti and Castes

Are all irrespective of caste and spiritual attainment entitled to enter into the way of Bhakti? We have to distinguish. Theoretically only the three higher castes are qualified to follow the path of Bhakti, and the scriptures ordain that the *adhikārins* for Bhaktiyoga should be only those of the first three castes. This is because the way Bhakti entails the study of the vedas, the execution of different *nitya* and *naimittika* karmas, for which only the higher castes have authority, and other śāstraic qualifications like the initiation ceremony (*upanayana*) which can be obtained only by the higher castes. Ramanuja too airs this opinion in his commentary on the Brahmasūtra I. 3. 9. But in practice we see no distinction of castes and colour in the sphere of Bhakti. Guhaka, a *candala*²⁰ and Sabari, a *candala* girl²¹, some of the Alvars who were of lower births were staunch devotees of God. Prahlāda, the son of an asura king, was one of the greatest votaries of Visnu ever known.²² As Sri Ramakṛṣṇa Paramahansa rightly observes: 'Who ever needs the study of *Sastras* to speak to his own mother?' Love of God, devotion to one's own creator and sentiments of gratitude to the bestower of graces etc. cannot be the monopoly of one particular section of human family. Sandilya says: "Even the despised castes have a right to it"²³. Narada observes in his Sūtras: "Among men of devotion, there is no distinction of caste, learning, beauty, birth, riches or rituals."²⁴ Garuda purana maintains: "Any of these eight kinds of Bhakti, even if they exist in a *mleccha*, turn him into a prince of Brahmins, a sage, an ascetic, a truly wise man."²⁵

In order to reconcile these two views, Bhakti is seen in two perspectives. *Samānya* Bhakti and *Parā* Bhakti (we may recall here that Dharma too is divided like this. *Samanya* Dharma and *Svadharmā* or *Viśeṣadharmā*). Every human being has access to the *Samanya* Bhakti, which is essential for any progress in spiritual life. This *Samanya Bhakti Sadhana* is the infrastructure of the life oriented to God, and by the intelligent use of which one can obtain the spiritual maturity to rise to the *Para* Bhakti which indeed is the ultimate *mokṣasadhana*. Such a devotee progresses steadily in love of the Lord and ultimately is immersed in God that he is not able to forget Him even for a fraction of a second. And the Lord grants him His grace with which he attains Him, enjoys Him and is in communion with Him for eternity in the state of liberation.

'I Am His', 'He is Mine'

If we analyse the concept of Bhakti in Mahābhāgavata we may discern two forms of Bhakti there: The first form of Bhakti is called the '*Santa Bhakti*', which is fundamentally based on the consciousness and feeling "I am His". The predominant substratum of this Bhakti is knowledge of God, of His divine majesty and greatness. This Bhakti ends in the merger of the devotee in the Divine. So the Bhakti based on knowledge aims at *sayūjya*, whereby the soul becomes one with the Absolute, just like the water of the river disappears in the ocean. It is said that the Gopikas in the rapture of love sometimes felt that they were Kṛṣṇa himself. On this type of Bhakti Bhagavata says: "By the strength of their attachment to Me, they became oblivious of their individuality and the whole objective world, just as the mind of a contemplative in *Samadhi* and the river merged in the ocean overcome all distinctions created by name and form."²⁶

The second type of Bhakti is *Prema Bhakti*, the starting point of which is basically the feeling, "He is mine". This form of Bhakti is characterized by the intense personal affection to the Lord, which necessarily turns into a passion for the communion and service of the Lord as a servant, child, friend, sponse or lover. Self-negation, joyful service of God, love-intoxication etc. are the salient features of this love. As this Bhakti matures the devotee knows about his unity with God. But this unity is not identity, nor is it the ontological cessation through dissolution in God. The individuality of the devotee is kept up. He is an eternal servant of the Lord and is a *Bhāgavatottama*, (one who sees) the Lord in all, and all as united in the being of the Lord. In the state of mukti he sheds away the material body made up of *prakṛti*, and gets a divine body made up of *Suddha Sattva*. Even in *Vaikuṇṭha*, the supreme abode of pure bliss and greatest joy, the contentment of the devotee is the service of the Lord (*Kainkarya*).

The Bhagavatha purana enumerates nine expressions of such Bhakti: They are *Sravanam* (hearing the praises and great deeds of God), *Kirtanam* (singing the praises of God), *Smaranam* (remembering the Lord and His mercy), *Pādasevanam* (serving at the feet of the Lord) *Arcanam* (offering of gifts), *Vandanam* (loving adoration), *Dasyam* (Servitude), *Sakhyam* (friendship), and *Atmanivedanam* (self-surrender)²⁷. Of these nine expressions of

Bhakti, the first three are related to contemplation, the second three are based on the sacred services to please the divine Person and last three project the attitude of self-surrender and subservience to the God of love.

Karma-Jnana-Bhakti

The savants of the past have prescribed mainly three means for emancipation, namely, the Jñānamārga, Bhaktimārga and Karmamārga. There is a fourth means which is open to all, irrespective of castes and stages of life (varṇa and āśrama), which goes by the name *Prapatti-yoga* or *Saranāgatavidyā* or *Nyāsavidyā* (the way of self-surrender). It has been already mentioned that total surrender to the will of God is, in fact, also an essential ingredient of the Bhaktimārga. Now the question is: What is the exact relationship of Bhakti to Jñāna and Karma? According to the Viśiṣṭadvaita Vedānta of the Sri-vaiṣṇavites, the Karmayoga and Jñānayoga should lead the aspirant for emancipation to the Bhaktiyoga which alone is the real *sadhāna* for *mukti*.

The advaita vedānta emphatically denied the necessity of karma for realization. The acāryas of the Bhakti movement consistently demanded that a *mumukṣu* should carry out all the duties ordained by the scriptures for his particular varṇa and āśrama. But the yogi has to perform these actions without any desire for the fruits thereof. Gita calls it the *niṣkāmakarma*. Generally three types of renouncement are advised to a karmayogi: (i) *Sangatyāga*—the renouncement of the attachment to karma, (ii) *Kartṛtyāga*—the sense that 'I am the agent of action' should be abandoned—and (iii) *Phalatyāga*—the renouncement of the results of actions. Such karma has various salutary effects. It converts the karmayogi into a *sthitaprajña*, that is a man of steadfast wisdom in relation to the life mudane²⁸. Karmayoga also purifies the antahkaraṇa—mind—and leads him to Jñānayoga. In this context it is good to recall the seven means that Ramanuja advocates for coming to the way of Bhakti. They are: *Viveka* (discrimination), *Vimoka* (controlling the passions), *Abhyāsa* (practice of meditation), *Kriyā* (sacrificial works), *Kalyāṇa* (practice of virtues like truthfulness, integrity, non-violence etc.), *Anavasāda* (freedom from weakness) and *Anuddharṣa* (suppression of excessive joy)²⁹.

Jñānayoga too is an essential prerequisite to Bhakti. In fact Jñāna marga should assume the form of Bhakti (*Bhaktirupāṇnam Jñānam*). This amounts to saying that Bhakti is a kind of intellectual love of God. Mind, heart and intellect are involved in the practice of Bhakti. According to Ramanuja

Jñānamarga enables us to understand the real nature and function of the individual self (*Atmayāthātmyajñānam*). When one thus knows the nature of the soul and its dependence on Paramātmān, it also realizes the need of Bhakti. The individual self recognizes itself as the body of Brahman who is the inner controller. Through the *ātmāsākṣātkāra* the soul knows that Brahman is the ground of all living and being, and that the individual self is totally subservient to this absolute Brahman. This consciousness leads him to the superior realms of knowledge, which is in fact in the form Bhakti.

Foot Notes

1. Chandogya Up. VI. 2.1; Svetasvatara up. VI. 19
2. Chandogya Up. VIII. 3.2; Brhadaranyaka Up. I. 4.10; Mundaka Up. III. 2.9.
3. Gita XVIII. 65-66
4. Naradhabhaktisutra 2-3
5. Sandilya Bhaktisutra I. 1. 2.
6. Bhagavatapurānam III. 25. 32-33
7. Quoted in: Datta Aswini Kumar, Bhaktiyoga, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Bombay 1981, p. 1
8. Sribhāṣya on Brahmasutra I. 1. 1.
10. Datta Aswini Kumar, Op. Cit. p. 2
11. Kulasekharaperumal, Mukandamala, 6-8
12. A Bengali saint (1723-1775), quoted in Datta Aswini Kumar, Op. cit. p. 2
13. Gita XVIII. 62
14. Anatarangachar, The Philosophy of Sadhan in Visistadvaita, Prasaraṅga University of Mysore 1967, p. 63. This paper deals with Bhakti as it is treated in the Vaisnava religions, especially Srivaisnavism.
15. Gita VII. 7-8
16. Gita VII. 16
17. Gita VII. 19
18. Sri Vedānta Desika, Varadarajapancasat
19. Mahābhagavatapurānam, VI, 1.
20. Rāmāyana, Ayodhyakāṇḍa, Chapter 50
21. Rāmāyana, Aranyakāṇḍa, Chapter 74
22. Mahābhagavatapurāna, VII, 1
23. Sandilyabhaktisutram II. 71
24. Naradhabhaktisutra 72
25. Garudapurāna I. 231. 9-10
26. Mahābhagavatapurāna XI. 12. 12
27. Mahābhagavatapurāna VII. 5.23
28. Gita II 54-72
29. Sribhāṣya of Rāmanuja on Brahmasutra I. 1. 1

Statement about Ownership and other Particulars
about **Jeevadhara**

(Form IV — see Rule 8)

1. Place of Publication : Kottayam.
2. Periodicity of its Publication : Bi-monthly.
3. Printer's Name : Fr Constantine Manalel, C.M.I.
Nationality : Indian
Address : Theology Centre
Kottayam.
4. Publisher's Name : Fr Constantine Manalel, C.M.I.
Nationality : Indian
Address : Theology Centre
Kottayam.
5. Editor's Name : Fr Constantine Manalel, C.M.I.
Nationality : Indian
Address : Theology Centre,
Kottayam.

Names and addresses of individuals who own the Newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one percent of the total capital: Fr Constantine Manalel, C. M. I. Theology Centre, Kottayam.

I, Constantine Manalel, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

(Sd)
Publisher.